

This electronic thesis or dissertation has been downloaded from the King's Research Portal at <https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/>



**A study of a Japanese new religion with special reference to its ideas of the millenium : the case of Kofuku-No-Kagaku, the Institute for Research in Human Happiness**

Fukui, Masaki

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author and no quotation from it or information derived from it may be published without proper acknowledgement.

**END USER LICENCE AGREEMENT**



**Unless another licence is stated on the immediately following page** this work is licensed

under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International

licence. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

You are free to copy, distribute and transmit the work

Under the following conditions:

- Attribution: You must attribute the work in the manner specified by the author (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work).
- Non Commercial: You may not use this work for commercial purposes.
- No Derivative Works - You may not alter, transform, or build upon this work.

Any of these conditions can be waived if you receive permission from the author. Your fair dealings and other rights are in no way affected by the above.

**Take down policy**

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact [librarypure@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:librarypure@kcl.ac.uk) providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

A Study of a Japanese New Religion with Special  
Reference to its Ideas of the Millennium:  
The case of Kofuku-no-Kagaku,  
The Institute for Research in Human Happiness

Masaki Fukui

for Ph.D

Department of Theology and Religious Studies  
King's College, University of London

2004



## Abstract

Kofuku-no-Kagaku (The Institute for Research in Human Happiness) is often considered to be one of the so-called 'new' new religions of Japan. This Movement, since its establishment in 1986, has consistently claimed its objectives to be 'soul-training' and the creation of, what it calls, 'The Buddha-land Utopia'. By 'soul-training' it means the development of the soul by studying and practising the teachings of the Buddha through the process of reincarnation, and by 'Utopia' it means the creation of the Ideal World on earth where everyone practises the Buddha's teaching and can say 'I am happy'. Followers believe that this lifetime is a great opportunity to achieve these objectives, under the guidance of their leader Ryuho Okawa, who is considered to be the reincarnation of the Buddha, Hermes and, more significantly, the embodiment of the Highest Divine Spirit, 'El Cantare'. In the Sociology of Religion the concept of creating a new ideal world or the expectation of the arrival of the Kingdom of God, because the state of the present world is understood to be in crisis, is called 'millenarianism'. Some researchers suggest that almost all new religions in Japan (if not all) are millenarian in orientation. My research, which includes participant observation, a questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews, is an investigation into Kofuku-no-Kagaku with special reference to its ideas about the Millennium. I look at the nature of its distinctive millenarian ideas and whether Kofuku-no-Kagaku can be called a millenarian movement in the sociological sense. Kofuku-no-Kagaku came into existence in the middle of an economic boom in Japan, and I look at why millenarian ideas should still be so appealing in this modern context, where such prosperity must have dramatically improved people's lives. I also consider how the characteristics of Kofuku-no-Kagaku's millenarian ideas compare with other Japanese new religions.

# Contents

<b>Abstract</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>List of Figures, Tables and Charts</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>I Introduction</b>	<b>8</b>
1.1 Context	8
1.2 Aims	12
<b>II Survey of Literature</b>	<b>14</b>
2.1 Contents of Chapter	14
2.2 Survey of Literature Specific to Millenarianism in Japanese New Religions	14
2.3 The History of Millenarianism in Japan	36
2.4 Survey of General Literature: Millenarianism as a Sociological Concept	40
2.5 Conclusion	45
<b>III Methodology</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>IV The History and Development of Kofuku-no-Kagaku</b>	<b>62</b>
4.1 Contents of Chapter	62
4.2 A Brief Review of the Life of the Founder, Ryuho Okawa, up to the Foundation of the Movement in 1986	62
4.3 The Development of the Movement (1986 to the Present)	70
4.4 Overview of the Organisation of the Movement	96
4.5 Conclusion	98
<b>V Main Beliefs and Practices of Kofuku-no-Kagaku</b>	<b>100</b>
5.1 Contents of Chapter	100
5.2 Beliefs	101
5.3 Publications	119
5.4 Practice	127
5.5 Conclusion	132
<b>VI Membership and Social Composition</b>	<b>134</b>
6.1 Contents of Chapter	134
6.2 Membership	134
6.3 Second Generation Members	137
6.4 Membership Overseas	138
6.5 Grades of Membership	141



6.6	Demographic Data and Socio-economic Background	146
6.7	Encountering Kofuku-no-Kagaku	165
6.8	Conclusion	175
<b>VII</b>	<b>Kofuku-no-Kagaku and the Millennium</b>	<b>177</b>
7.1	Contents of Chapter	177
7.2	Kofuku-no-Kagaku's Apocalyptic Vision, Circa 1986 to 1996	178
7.3	Kofuku-no-Kagaku – The Issue of Nationalism and the Media	183
7.4	Kofuku-no-Kagaku's Change in Emphasis on the Apocalypse, 1996 to Present	188
7.5	Kofuku-no-Kagaku's Utopia Through Self-transformation	192
7.6	Conclusion	206
<b>VIII</b>	<b>Kofuku-no-Kagaku's Millennium Compared and Contrasted</b>	<b>209</b>
8.1	Contents of Chapter	209
8.2	Comparison and Contrast – Tenrikyō to Mahikari	209
8.3	Comparison and Contrast – GLA, Agonshū and Aum Shinrikyō	216
8.3	Conclusion	224
<b>IX</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>226</b>
	<b>Appendix I</b>	<b>239</b>
	<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>243</b>

# List of Figures, Tables and Charts

## Figures

1	Drawing of Maitreya: the Future Buddha	39
2	Location of Kyoto City (Kyoto Prefecture), Otsu City (Shiga Prefecture) and Tokyo	51
3	Sō-honzan Shōshin-kan (Utsunomiya Head Temple)	88
4	Nikkō Shōja	89
5	Biwako Shōshin-kan	91
6	Location map of Kofuku-no-Kagaku's temples/retreat centres	92
7	Promotion for the film <i>'The Laws of the Sun – The Way to El Cantare'</i>	94
8	President Ryuho Okawa	96
9	'The Laws of the Sun', Japanese, English and Portuguese publications	122
10	A cartoon section from the journal <i>'Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly'</i>	126
11	The 'RO' symbol	145

## Tables and Charts

1	Increase in the membership of Kofuku-no-Kagaku	137
2	Gender distribution of members	147
2a	Pie chart illustrating gender distribution	147
3	Age distribution	148
3a	Bar chart illustrating age distribution	148
4	Marital status	149
5	Year of joining	150
5a	Bar chart illustrating year of joining	151
5b	Year of joining in relation to gender	152
6	Bar chart illustrating occupation	153
6a	Occupation in relation to gender and in total	154
7	Pie chart illustrating final education completed	156
7a	Final education completed in relation to gender and in total	156
8	Pie chart illustrating previous religious affiliation	158
8a	Previous religious affiliation in relation to gender and in total	158
9	Pie chart illustrating proportion of previous religions	159
9a	Previous religions	159
10	Previous NRMs	160
11	Belief in God, Buddha, spirits, the world after death and reincarnation before joining	162

11a	Pie chart illustrating belief in God, Buddha, spirits, the world after death and reincarnation before joining	162
12	Level of interest in/sympathy to religion and religious issues before joining, in relation to gender and in total	163
12a	Pie chart illustrating level of interest in/sympathy to religion and religious issues before joining, in relation to gender and in total	163
13	Religious life before joining	164
13a	Bar chart illustrating religious life before joining	165
14	Principal trigger for joining Kofuku-no-Kagaku	166
14a	Bar chart illustrating principal trigger for joining Kofuku-no-Kagaku	166
15	Most important books (first choice)	168
15a	Most important books (second choice)	168
15b	Most important books (combined total)	168
16	Principal reason or motive for joining	170
16a	Bar chart illustrating principal reason or motive for joining	171
17	The attractive features of Kofuku-no-Kagaku	174
17a	Bar chart illustrating the attractive features of Kofuku-no-Kagaku	175
18	Pie chart illustrating concern about the future, especially around 1999	194
19	Pie chart illustrating popularity of predictions	195
20	Pie chart illustrating how much members consider they have transformed through their affiliation to Kofuku-no-Kagaku	195
21	Pie charts illustrating how much members consider they have transformed in relation to specific activities in Kofuku-no-Kagaku	196
22	Pie chart illustrating how much members consider they have transformed in relation to training provided at Kofuku-no-Kagaku's temples/retreat centres	196



## Acknowledgements

There are so many people without whose support I would not have been able to complete my research and write up this thesis. First, I would like to express my deep gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Peter B. Clarke, for his tremendous guidance and keen interest in my research subject, which has been an incredible support throughout my research. My parents gave me most of the financial support I needed, as well as constant mental support; they always believed that I would one day complete the thesis and, very patiently, waited for that day. I cannot find the words to express my gratitude to them for the support they have given me over all this time. I would also very much like to thank Helen Lee, who did me the honour of becoming my wife while I was writing this thesis, and who gave me enormous encouragement and inspiration.

When I started my research into the subject of millenarianism, a number of my fellow researchers very kindly advised me that I had better hurry up, because the new millennium was approaching. I would like to thank them for their encouragement and the inspirational discussions we had.

I would also like to thank both the staff and the members of Kofuku-no-Kagaku for their cooperation with my research, especially Mr Yuki Oikawa, Head of the International Division, Tokyo. Mr Oikawa made my research very smooth by kindly providing a large amount of his time to me in a number of long interviews, and also by allowing me access to important facilities and valuable information. The staff and managers at the Shiga and Kyoto Central Branches were extremely helpful, too, and without their help I would certainly not have been able to conduct my fieldwork so smoothly. I would also like to express my thanks to the successive Managers of the Movement's European Branch in London (IRHH Europe), who have all been extremely understanding of my research, and tolerant of my frequent visits and sometimes lengthy interviews; I would especially like to mention Mr Taku Igata and Mr Teddy Takagi.

This research was partly supported by a generous grant from King's College London Theological Trust, and a small grant from the University of London Central Research Fund. These were a tremendous help and my sincere thanks go to both institutions.

# I. Introduction

## 1.1 Context

*'From now on,  
Whether Nostradamus' and other soothsayers'  
Terrifying revelations and predictions are to fail or not,  
Depends on the activities of all of you!  
We may not be able  
To completely alter them anymore,  
We have already reached that stage of time!  
However,  
In what ways such terrifying revelations will come about  
Can still be changed!  
It will be determined  
By how much light, energy, and power  
This Movement of Truth can hold!'.<sup>1</sup>*

These words are taken from a speech entitled *'The Victory of Faith'* and spoken by Ryuho Okawa, Founder and President of *Kofuku-no-Kagaku*, 'The Institute for Research in Human Happiness (IRH)', a Japanese new religious movement (NRM) that was established in 1986, and which attracted a large following during the late 1980s and 1990s. The speech was made on 15<sup>th</sup> July 1991, at the first 'Birthday Festival' of the Movement to be held in Tokyo Dome Stadium; an event that celebrated Okawa's 35<sup>th</sup> birthday. Tokyo Dome is one of the major indoor baseball stadia in Japan, and about 50,000 gathered to attend the Festival. Okawa never addresses an audience with a prepared script, but speaks fluently and passionately from the heart, and on this occasion he held the attention of his huge audience with details of the mission to save the world that lay before them. Okawa also chose this occasion to reveal to his audience for the first time his true identity as El Cantare, the Highest Divine Spirit of the Terrestrial Spirit Group, and as the Eternal Buddha. He also revealed the meaning of this crucial period in history by giving a warning that if the modern world carried on the way it was going, a dark age might be unavoidable, and that the mission of Kofuku-no-Kagaku was to save humanity from such a dark age.

Kofuku-no-Kagaku is one of Japan's many new religions or *shin shūkyō* 新宗教, and, as discussed below, is sometimes also referred to as a 'new' new religion. The emergence of Japanese NRMs is not easy to place within a definite time frame. It is often argued that they began to emerge in the early 19th Century, and one such early example is *Kurozumikyō* (1814). Shimazono states that most of the major new religions

---

<sup>1</sup> Ryuho Okawa, 1994a: 37-8 (my own translation). See: pages 13-50 for the whole speech.



were established between 1920 to 1950, and had made significant developments by circa 1970; examples are *Soka Gakkai* (1930), *Risshō Kōseikai* (1938), *Sekai Kyūseikyō* (1935) and *Hitonomichi Kyōdan* (1925) (reformed as *PL Kyōdan* in 1945) (Shimazono 2001: 6-7). Hardacre, who has done extensive research on Kurozumikyō, points out that NRMs appeared in the following phases, 1800–1860, the 1920s and post Second World War (Hardacre, 1988: 4). Clarke focuses instead on a start date of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century which is convincing, he argues, because it was the era that saw the rise of two particularly important movements, *Tenrikyō* (1838) and *Konkōkyō* (1859), which were to play a very significant role in influencing NRMs that came after them (Clarke, 1999: 12).

A common feature of NRMs in Japan from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century is their millenarian teaching. Millenarian teaching is often understood to embrace a prophecy of the coming of a perfect world, which is variously given such terms as the Kingdom of God, the Ideal World, the Utopia or the Buddha-land. This anticipation is usually accompanied by prophecies of the imminent destruction of the present order, referred to as the Apocalypse.

Whilst millenarianism can refer to the narrow and precise concept found in Judeo-Christian belief, it is also understood sociologically from a wider, more inclusivist perspective, such as Norman Cohn's classical definition. Cohn describes millenarian belief as:

‘(a) collective, in the sense that it is to be enjoyed by the faithful as a collectivity; (b) terrestrial, in the sense that it is to be realized on earth and not in some other-worldly heaven; (c) imminent, in the sense that it is to come both soon and suddenly; (d) total, in the sense that it is utterly to transform life on earth, so that the new dispensation will be no mere improvement on the present but perfection itself; (e) miraculous, in the sense that it is to be accomplished by, or with the help of, supernatural agencies.’  
(Cohn, 1970: 13)

It is this definition of millenarianism that I shall use when I refer to Japanese NRMs as millenarian. It is important to note, however, that these characteristics are only guidelines to the phenomenon as it is found in Japan. This is because, as I will discuss throughout this thesis, millenarianism in the Japanese context presents unique angles on these ideas.

Because the term ‘Millennium’ belongs essentially to Judeo-Christian belief, and that specific concept has not taken root in Japan, some sociologists in Japan, such as Shimazono and Tsushima, have chosen to call the NRMs that have a millenarian element ‘religions of eschatological prophecy’ (*shūmatsu-yogen shūkyō* 終末予言宗教)



instead of calling them 'millenarian religions'. They cite the People's Temple (Jonestown), the Branch Davidians and *Aum Shinrikyō* as examples of religions that display such 'eschatological prophecy' (Shimazono, 1997b, 70-1). Shimazono and Reader also trace the origins of some types of millenarian thought to a 'world-rejection' view that creates eschatological or apocalyptic expectation, and this goes on to create the expectation for the Kingdom of God, that is, the Millennium. Shimazono sees millenarian expectation and apocalyptic expectation to be virtually inseparable.<sup>2</sup> This is true of Christian millenarianism, and of some NRMs too; for example Sekai Kyūseikyō (The Church of World Messianity) teaches that 'the old house must be destroyed before the new one can be built', because the calamities are all part of God's purification.<sup>3</sup> However, this definition upon the above sequence (world-rejectionism – apocalyptic expectation – establishment of the Kingdom of God) can over emphasise the 'destructive' element of the concept, and from this perspective it can be seen to be a negative or even dangerous idea, rather than a positive, salvation orientated religious belief. It is certainly the case that such a belief can be dangerous if one only looks at NRMs such as Aum Shinrikyō, the Branch Davidians and the People's Temple, all of which have been responsible for tragic incidents, including mass suicides, the gathering of weapons and aggressive behaviour aimed at the rest of society, and have resulted in harm and much loss of life. However, there is a problem in the definition above, offered by Shimazono, Tsushima and Reader, because millenarianism in Japanese NRMs is not always accompanied by apocalyptic expectation.

I would not deny the fact that the two concepts of the Millennium and the Apocalypse have historically tended to be closely interwoven, and even within modern religious phenomena these ideas have indeed appeared together. However, there is a very new context in Japan's scientifically, economically and industrially advanced post-modern society, which has never been seen in history before. A world-rejectionist view, political oppression, abject poverty, a sense of injustice within society, a lack of representation and various forms of social, physical and psychological deprivation, are often seen as the cause of the rise of millenarianism, but these extreme conditions have improved considerably in many parts of the world, especially in the, so-called, western world with democratisation, the development of various social systems and especially economic prosperity. In Japan, however, new types of NRMs that display some 'post-modern' qualities have either risen or managed to make considerable developments

---

<sup>2</sup> See: Shimazono, 2001: 62-9

<sup>3</sup> Thomsen, 1963: 177



since the late 1970s and early 1980s when Japan became one of the most prosperous nations in the world. In virtually all these religions in this context of a modern and prosperous society, too, one can again observe the great ideals of ‘the arrival of the Kingdom of God’, ‘the establishment of the Ideal World’ or ‘the enlightenment and salvation of the entire human race’. Why this is the case, and what unique characteristics the concept of millenarianism now displays in Japan are questions that concern this thesis.

The term *shin shin shūkyō* 新新宗教, or ‘new’ new religion is sometimes applied to particular NRMs and, like the term millenarianism, also needs some qualification. This term is used in journalistic circles to refer to those NRMs that were established recently. Some scholars use it to refer to those NRMs that ‘began to flourish in the 1980s when the new religions had deemed to have peaked’ (Clarke, 1999: 12-3). Shimazono uses the term ‘new’ new religions from a similar angle, stressing that it does not necessarily refer to the fact that a religion is newly founded, but that it has ‘flourished’ and managed to make significant developments in the 1970s and 1980s (Shimazono, 1992b: 8 and 2001: 14).<sup>4</sup> Examples of old movements that Shimazono considers to be ‘new’ new religions include Jehovah’s Witnesses (1926) and *Shin’nyō-en* (1935). Shimazono also calls these types of ‘new’ new religions ‘post modern new religions’ or ‘new religions of the post modern era’.<sup>5</sup> In other words, NRMs of the new era are ‘new’ new religions, and examples include *Agonshū*, GLA, *Mahikari* movements, Rajneesh Movement, Aum Shinrikyō, World Mate, *Hō-no-hana Sampōgyō* and Kofuku-no-Kagaku.

In the ‘new’ new religions, millenarian as well as apocalyptic expectation has been greatly influenced by the prophecies of the French physician and astrologist Michel de Nostredame, more commonly known as ‘Nostradamus’ (1503-1566), whose predictions about the end of the world were introduced to Japan by the author, Ben Gotō in 1973 in his book entitled ‘*The Great Prophecies of Nostradamus*’ ノストラダムスの大予言.<sup>6</sup> This book became a best-seller and was so popular, Gotō followed it with a further nine volumes, the last of which was published in 1998.

---

<sup>4</sup> This perhaps includes the 1990s too, because Shimazono talks about movements that made significant developments in the 1990s in his book written in 2001, and refers to them as ‘new’ new religions.

<sup>5</sup> Here, Shimazono uses the Japanese term *atarashii jidai* 新しい時代 that literally means the ‘new age’. However, the term ‘New Age’ has a different connotation in the sociology of religion, and for this reason the translation I tend to choose here is ‘new era’ rather than ‘new age’, in order to avoid unnecessary confusion. See: Shimazono, 2001: 12

<sup>6</sup> The full title of this book is: ‘*Nostradamus no Dai-yōgen: Semarikuru 1999-nen 7-no tsuki Jinnrui-metsubo no Hi*’ or ‘*The Great Prophecies of Nostradamus: July 1999, the Impending Day of the Total Annihilation of the Human Race*’, which was published in 1973 (Goto, 1991a).



## 1.2 Aims

I shall discuss in the following chapter how much of the literature concerning Japanese NRMs and their tendency to be millenarian, addresses the possible causes of this phenomenon. For some, like Blacker and McFarland, for example, the rise of Japanese NRMs is seen as a response to a context of ‘social anomie’. However, this explanation, which refers to particularly difficult periods in Japanese history, such as the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the Meiji Restoration, the 1920s and 1930s when recession was severe, and the aftermath of the Second World War, no longer applies to those religions, such as Kofuku-no-Kagaku, which have flourished in the late 1980s and 1990s and yet still display millenarian tendencies. The new ‘post modern’ context makes it very difficult to generalise about the causes of what nonetheless appears to be a common phenomenon; as I shall discuss in the following chapter, the apparent causes of one movement’s emergence and millenarian ideas do not necessarily fit with another’s.

Instead of concentrating on the causes of NRMs and their millenarian tendencies, Clarke offers an alternative approach to millenarianism, when he argues that it can be used to highlight the fact that people are seeking change (Clarke, 2000: 130). As Clarke has argued, if millenarianism is about people’s needs, aspirations, desires and hopes, it is relative and ever changing. This can be seen in Japan in terms of the changing goals that Japanese NRMs have been concerned with. After the war, for instance, the immediate need was for material goods, health and a sense of national identity, now it appears to concern itself with inner transformation. All these can be generally understood, according to Clarke, to come down to a ‘quest for human happiness’ (ibid., 131). It is the aim of this thesis to study the ‘new’ new religion Kofuku-no-Kagaku, with special reference to its ideas about the Millennium, in order to address such questions as what the nature of its Millennium is, and why millenarian ideas should be so appealing in the modern Japanese context when people no longer seem to be suffering from ‘social anomie’. It is also the aim of this thesis to show how the characteristics of Kofuku-no-Kagaku’s Millennium compare with other millenarian movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries. An understanding of these questions will help in an understanding of what people think and feel about themselves and about the condition of an advanced modern society, such as Japan.

In the light of the context of Japanese NRMs, and the aims that I have set out above, I shall begin with a survey of the sociological literature so far available on millenarian ideas, particularly in the Japanese context. In Chapter III, I shall detail the methodology I have employed in order to carry out my research. In Chapter IV, I shall

discuss the history and development of Kofuku-no-Kagaku, and in Chapter V, I shall discuss the beliefs and practices of the Movement. In Chapter VI, I shall discuss the social composition of Kofuku-no-Kagaku from information obtained during my research on the Movement, particularly in relation to my fieldwork of participant observation, questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews. In this chapter I will also discuss details of membership, including numbers, systems of joining and membership overseas. In Chapter VII, I will look specifically at the Movement's Millennium, including further results from my fieldwork that are relevant. In Chapter VIII, I shall compare and contrast Kofuku-no-Kagaku's Millennium with the Millennium in a select number of other Japanese NRMs, such as *Omoto*, *Seichō-no-Ie*, GLA, Agonshū and Aum Shinrikyō. In Chapter IX, I shall conclude with a discussion of the important findings contained in the above chapters.

As mentioned above, I shall now turn, in the next chapter, to a survey of the sociological literature on millenarian ideas, particularly in the Japanese context.



## II. Survey of Literature

### 2.1 Contents of Chapter

In order to put my discussion of Kofuku-no-Kagaku's millenarianism into context I will, in this chapter, provide a survey of the literature on millenarianism. I shall do this in order to show the ways in which the concept in Kofuku-no-Kagaku resembles and differs from the concept in other NRMs.

First I will look at the diverse forms of modern millenarianism in the Japanese context. I shall pay particular attention to the context in which millenarian movements arose, spread and developed, and the various theories offered by such writers as Blacker, McFarland and Shimazono as to how this context influenced millenarian ideas.

I will also look at the history of millenarian ideas in Japan before the modern period, to see if there is any tradition of millenarian thought within Japanese culture. Finally, I shall survey the relevant literature on millenarianism in general.

### 2.2 Survey of Literature Specific to Millenarianism in Japanese NRMs

In this section I shall discuss writings specifically on Japanese millenarianism and look, in particular, at Blacker (1971), McFarland (1967), Shimazono (1979, 1986, and 2001), Ooms (1993), Kisala (1998) and Clarke (1999 and 2000). I shall discuss their ideas concerning Japanese millenarianism and analyse what they see as its form, content and cause. I shall begin with the writings of Blacker and McFarland, both Japanologists and sociologists of religion who analyse the emergence of Japanese NRMs in the light of the 'social crisis' or 'social anomie' theory.

Blacker begins her article, 'Millenarian Aspects of the New Religions in Japan' with reference to Norman Cohn's classical understanding of Biblical millenarianism, and makes particular reference to his ideas that its origins are a response to oppression and social chaos. She states that millenarianism can be seen 'among peoples oppressed, disinherited and humiliated by the intrusion of a foreign culture' (Blacker, 1971: 567), and that it should be understood as 'a specific solution to these miseries, a solution through myth to a problem which mere human enterprise seems powerless to remedy' (ibid., 567). She, therefore, also points to powerlessness as an important element in the rise of millenarian ideas, as well as a lack of values and meaning, and in the Japanese context talks of the 'collapse and disgrace of the system of State Shinto' as well as the 'defeat and occupation' that marked the end of the Second World War (ibid., 571).

Blacker's analysis also applies to two other difficult times in Japanese history; first the 'famine' and 'civil war' of the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century (around the end of the Tokugawa era)<sup>1</sup> leading up to the Meiji Period (1868-1912), and also the 'economic depression' and 'oppressive totalitarian militarism' of the 1920s. She sees in all three times a similar situation of social chaos:

'The cults "newly arising" at all three periods during the last hundred years have been widely recognised to be a response to the "acute anomie" into which the Japanese people were thrown in the course of their rapid modernisation and by their eventual humiliating defeat.' (ibid., 570)

There is no doubt in Blacker's mind that this acute anomie is important in understanding the rise of Japanese NRMs. What she goes on to address, however, is how closely they can be compared to what she calls 'modern messianic movements' (ibid., 567) with reference to the work on millenarianism offered by sociologists such as Worsley; she is thus looking for three specific characteristics in the movements, namely a context of acute anomie, the presence of a charismatic leader that starts the movement, and the prediction of a future utopia that will herald an end to the suffering of the present time.

In relation to the first characteristic, the three periods in question are for Blacker: 'needless to say, ones of especially bewildering upheaval, insecurity and disrupted tradition' (ibid., 571) and, therefore, fit the traditional understanding of the causes of modern messianic movements. Blacker goes on to say: 'That these conditions of widespread misery and loss of accepted values have had a powerful influence on the growth of the new cults is obvious to the most casual observer' (ibid., 571). Proof of such motivation, for Blacker, is compounded by evidence from those who joined the movements. She recounts how they frequently speak of an intense personal suffering which is miraculously alleviated by their new belief, a suffering which is often characterised by illnesses which cannot be cured by conventional means, abject poverty or desperate powerlessness. So important is this abject despair before conversion that Blacker states:

'Without the initial anxiety and despair the good tidings would scarcely have been heard. Hence without the prevailing conditions of insecurity and misery it is doubtful whether the groups could have progressed at all.' (ibid., 573)

---

<sup>1</sup> Around this time (July, 1853) an American fleet, led by Mathew C. Perry, arrived in Japan and demanded the Japanese Tokugawa Government open the country up and end its period of isolationism. The Tokugawa Government had closed its doors to the outside world, with the exception of the Dutch and the Chinese, in the 1630s, and did not reopen them until the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The official reason for its policy of isolation was principally to ban Christianity.



In relation to the importance of a charismatic leader, Blacker draws attention to a consistent 'type' (ibid., 583) among the leaders of Japanese NRMs. There is often a state of powerless despair characterised by acute mental and physical suffering, followed by a religious experience (ibid., 574). Blacker cites the biographies of many founders of Japanese NRMs to illustrate her point, such as Miki Nakayama of Tenrikyō (ibid., 574-7), Nao Deguchi of Omoto (ibid., 577-9), and Sayo Kitamura of *Tenshōkōtai Jingūkyō* (ibid., 581-3), all three of whom were female. Blacker points out a number of common features amongst the founders of modern Japanese religions:

'...almost without exception the Founders come from poor, low-class families, peasants or small shopkeepers. They are often sickly, eccentric, moody and introspective. They suffer unusually bitter tribulations in early life. The women are married to drunken husbands, or bullied unmercifully by tyrannical mothers-in-law.' (ibid., 574)

Consistently, the gods involved in these experiences are not part of the traditional pantheon or group of deities of established Japanese religions, that is, important Buddhist or Shintō deities, such as Maitreya or Amaterasu respectively (ibid., 583). This seems to root this phenomenon in what Blacker calls 'shamanism'.

Significantly then, for the importance Blacker places on suffering and shamanic experience<sup>2</sup> as a cause of Japanese NRMs, the leaders' experiences appear to be consistent with her theory. There are, however, exceptions to this rule, Soka Gakkai being one (Blacker, 1971: 583-4), in the sense the founder, Tsunesaburō Makiguchi (1871-1944), did not have a weak, introspective, or eccentric personality, nor did he perform any shamanic act or give any supernatural revelations. He was a headmaster before he formed Soka Gakkai with his co-founder, Jōsei Toda (1900-1958).

The third and last characteristic Blacker applies to NRMs is the belief in an imminent millennium. This element is indeed common to the movements, but with one very significant difference, as, in the Japanese case, the Millennium ultimately 'depends on the efforts of men' (ibid., 585). There is consistently an element of cataclysm which will then herald the dawn of a new era without the pain and suffering which

---

<sup>2</sup> Kofuku-no-Kagaku uses the English words 'shaman' or 'shamanist' to refer to someone who performs occult (*jujutsu*: 呪術) and magic acts, yoga, fortune-telling, witchcraft and hypnosis (Okawa, 1996b, Ch.7; Kofuku-no-Kagaku ed., 1994: 49-51 and 140-1), which are all considered 'dangerous' in Kofuku-no-Kagaku. The reason for this is that these acts and mysterious forces are believed to belong to what the Movement calls 'Minor Heaven', although this 'shadowy' realm is not Hell, it is regarded as almost equally dangerous. When I use the words 'shaman' or 'shamanic' in this thesis, I take a more sociological understanding, where a shaman is understood as someone who is believed to possess spiritual as well as charismatic authority and is able to communicate with spirits, this is called 'channelling' in Kofuku-no-Kagaku (Okawa, 1992: 155-195). With this spiritual force, solutions can be found to such things as illness and social problems.



characterises the present dark age, but the stress in many, if not all, Japanese NRMs seems to be on a mental purification in preparation for this new era. In fact, many claim, such as Omoto in the 1920s, that only through belief, faith and membership in their Movement, can the cataclysm be survived and the new era dawn. This makes the efforts of members to remain faithful to the Movement, and spread the word as fast as possible, nothing less than a question of survival. For Blacker, this goes a long way to explain the aggressive conversion techniques of movements such as Soka Gakkai: 'Every new convert, whether drawn into the fold by fear and threats of divine punishment, or by the genuine fervour for promoting the new age, brings the longed-for millennium a step nearer' (ibid., 590).

One final question Blacker addresses in her article concerns the history of millenarian tradition in Japan. She concludes from a look at traditional Buddhism and shamanism, that ideas of salvation seem to have inspired little enthusiasm for an imminent change in world order.

Blacker concludes her article by drawing out some very important differences between 'modern millenarian movements' and Japanese NRMs. First, she notes that modern millenarian movements have a tendency to believe in a messiah figure that returns. This can be contrasted with the shamanic experience of the leaders of many Japanese NRMs where 'supernatural power rests solely on their divine possession and election to the role of divine instrument' (ibid., 597). Second, modern millenarian movements often talk of going back to the glories of a past age, whereas, she points out, Japanese NRMs talk of a future age with 'a modern image' (ibid., 598). Third, modern millenarian movements are clearly directed at a very tangible enemy, for instance the white man who invades, but in Japan the problem is a more intangible one: 'It is simply and a little undramatically "wrong thinking"' (ibid., 598).

Finally, and following on from the idea of wrong thinking, the Japanese NRMs can be characterised by the 'reality' of their preparations for the Millennium. Blacker draws out a strong difference between 'a frenzy of chiliastic expectation' in the modern millenarian movements and the 'shrewd and energetic steps towards rational adaptation to the new conditions' (ibid., 600) that characterise the Japanese NRMs.

Blacker has some interesting analysis in her article; she has used the characteristics of modern millenarian movements as a benchmark against which to compare the millenarianism of Japanese NRMs, and highlighted some new characteristics, too. She has also highlighted an important context which certainly seems to have played a part in the millenarian ideas of some of the movements. The



difficulty with the article, however, is that it is perhaps a little too simplistic. Whilst her theories can easily be applied to Omoto, for example, there are too many movements which fall outside the generalisations she makes. For example, she may cite the significance of the civil wars around 1868 for the emergence of NRMs, but Tenrikyō emerged long before this in 1838 when there was no known social bewilderment.

The shamanistic leader type is also problematic, not only in the case of Soka Gakkai, but also, and importantly for this thesis, in the case of Kofuku-no-Kagaku, which is another exception to this type, as I shall discuss in Chapter IV (p.62-70). It is also not the case that Nakayama, Foundress of Tenrikyō, was from a poor background, as she was in fact the daughter of a samurai, a man who was also influential as the head of a group of villages (Tenrikyo Overseas Mission Dept., 1986: 65). Neither did she have the same struggles in her married life that Deguchi faced; Nakayama did face poverty in her life, but this was after her possession experience had taken place and the god who possessed her commanded her to lead a life without material attachment (ibid., 74).<sup>3</sup>

Blacker mentions the term “wrong thinking” at the end of her article and perhaps does not have the space to explore it (Blacker, 1971: 598). It is, however, a tantalisingly brief mention of what is perhaps one of the key elements of the millenarianism of Japanese NRMs. Wrong thinking has been a vital factor in Japanese NRMs and it is deeply related to the concept of purification in some cases, but it is important to understand that this element, too, has a complex history of development, and its nature depends on the time when the new religion was established.

This picture is further complicated by both the Shintō and Buddhist concepts of purification and karma respectively, as well as *in'nen*, what I would translate in this case as ancestral spiritual ‘debt’, which has to be paid off by a family’s descendants; *in'nen* is a Buddhist term, which, strictly speaking, is about the Buddhist doctrines of the ‘Law of Cause and Effect’ and ‘Dependent Origination’. The concept of purification is very important in Shintō practice, and relates to ‘dust’ that is believed to collect on a person’s soul when they have forgotten the will of God and lived an unspiritual life, and many Japanese NRMs teach that problems appear because of people’s ancestors. Another and probably more common usage of the term is that of a negative ‘causal link’; when problems occur in a family, such as illness and disharmony, they are often considered by religious movements to be the result of unhappy ancestors,

---

<sup>3</sup> For more details on Nakayama’s life see: ‘The Teachings and History of Tenrikyo’, Tenrikyo Overseas Mission Department, 1986: 65-73.



who have not successfully or safely returned to the Pure Land or Heaven but are either suffering in Hell or still hanging around their family as spirits. Ancestor worship, in the case of Japanese NRMs is usually about ancestor veneration or ancestor comforting,<sup>4</sup> and is extremely important as it is considered to be related to a believer's spiritual welfare. This is the case in such movements as *Reiyūkai* (1930), *Risshō Kōseikai* (1938) and to some extent also in *Seichō-no-Ie* (1930) and *World Mate* (1984). *Reiyūkai*, in particular, originated from a style of ancestor worship advocated by Mugaku Nishida (1850-1918). His view was that social crisis was caused by wandering or 'stray' souls, and his aim was to make ancestor comforting compulsory for all Japanese nationals (Umetsu, 1997: 208). Family problems are cured by various types of ritual, such as purificatory rituals, prayer sessions, chanting and so forth, which are believed eventually<sup>to</sup> lead to the restoration of family or societal harmony. All these problems disrupt an individual's happiness and spiritual status, and must be dealt with if the members of a movement are to achieve 'right thinking'.

It is important to note, however, that the energetic steps towards creating the new worlds of the NRMs take many different forms depending on the movement in question. For instance, recruiting new members or simply becoming a good, cheerful or happier person by practising certain teachings can constitute efforts towards a new world, whilst for another movement, chanting and ancestor worship is the method employed.

In comparison with Blacker's article, McFarland's book 'The Rush Hour of the Gods' (1967), gives us a chance to look at a more extensive study of Japanese NRMs. In order to analyse the movements, McFarland moves away from the usual label of NRMs and argues that 'contemporary popular religious movements' (McFarland, 1967: 8) is a better term to use. This is because he finds the term 'new' misleading, as the movements are embedded in the complex history of religious tradition that has gone before them. The historical perspective takes McFarland as far back as the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, because it is here that he finds the initial evidence for the basis of his

---

<sup>4</sup> Aid for unsettled ancestors: by 'unsettled' I mean those ancestors' spirits that are believed to be unable to enter the Pure Land or Heaven, because they might be suffering in some way, and are thus prevented from reaching that Realm. This aid comes in the form of comforting the ancestors and helping them enter the Pure Land and is achieved through various rituals and offerings performed by the family. I call this type of ancestor worship 'ancestor comforting'. On the other hand 'ancestor veneration' refers to those ancestors who are believed to be in the Pure Land or Heaven, acting as guardian spirits for the family. It is important to understand that ancestors are considered to be almost divine, and traditionally they are referred to as buddhas, as they are believed to be inhabitants of the Pure Land, where all souls can attain enlightenment, which is the ultimate salvation in Pure Land Buddhism.



theory about the origins of the movements. That origin for McFarland, consistent with Blacker's theory, is one of social crisis and insecurity:

'From at least until that time until now social crisis afflicting the common people in particular has been endemic in Japan. By what must have seemed a relentless and often demonic process familiar ways of life were being disrupted'. (ibid., 11)

McFarland makes particular reference to the 'radical restructuring' (ibid., 11) of the Meiji Period, and the 'endemic crisis' (ibid., 44) and 'deep-running disillusionment' (ibid., 53) of the post-war years.

McFarland's theory is based on the following ideas. First, the established religions of Shintō, Buddhism and Confucianism seem to have been too scholarly and detached to offer help to people in these difficult times (ibid., 61). Second, there was really desperate suffering which left people feeling powerless, because there seemed to be no political or economic solution to their problems (ibid., 11). Third, the movements offered people a tangible, immediate solution to their problems, both in terms of healing (ibid., 79) and the promise of an imminent new world order (ibid., 58). Just as Blacker applies the characteristics of 'modern messianic movements' to Japanese NRMs, so does McFarland. He uses five factors to make his comparison, taking into account the three that Blacker considers: first, social crisis intensified by an intrusive culture; second, a charismatic leader; third, apocalyptic signs; and adding two more, ecstatic behaviour; and syncretic doctrine, that is, a mix of traditional religious ideas and completely new ones (ibid., 14).

McFarland goes on to discuss in detail particular movements, including Konkōkyō, Perfect Liberty Kyōdan, Seichō-no-Ie, Risshō Kōseikai and Soka Gakkai. From this historical, long-range analysis, he concludes that their existence can be explained in terms of a reaction to the suffering of the time, which was characterised by a deep feeling of powerlessness. For instance, he details Tenrikyō's history from 1838 and notes that their ideas marked a 'real convergence' (ibid., 58) from the ideas of the past, because they talked of a deliverance from suffering that 'would involve the changing of the world itself' (ibid., 58). This explanation in terms of deliverance, would suggest that when the suffering and disruption has gone, the movements will die out, as the need for their existence wanes. As McFarland himself points out, however, from his perspective in 1967, what about their existence or role as Japanese people cease to live in such extreme circumstances? He states: 'Though initially they functioned as crisis religions, it must not be assumed that they will continue to play only



this role. Japan is no longer a crisis-ridden land' (ibid., 12-13). He addresses this in part in his conclusion, by suggesting a certain routinisation of millenarian ideas. This, however, raises an interesting and further question of why the movements continue not only to remain popular but also to proliferate.

NRMs are then, according to both Blacker and McFarland, responses to extreme circumstances in a climate where traditional religions cannot offer satisfactory answers. They, therefore, find the causes of NRMs and the causes of their millenarian tendencies to be one and the same thing. However, McFarland's concentration on the Meiji Period and post-war eras leaves him vulnerable to the charge that he has not really considered NRMs that emerged earlier than this. He talks about Tenrikyō (1838), but does not address how it can actually have its roots in the period before the turbulent end of the Tokugawa Period (1867); it cannot actually fit in to the first of his five factors for defining NRMs, namely that they appear in a time of 'social crisis intensified by an intrusive culture'. Clarke points out that McFarland's theory, like Blacker's, does not work in relation to the period before the Meiji restoration (Clarke, 1999: 14). Clarke, as I shall discuss below, is wary of concentrating on theories that seek to find the causes for the rise of NRMs and concludes that 'general theories of rapid social change' are not very helpful, as the picture is simply too complex (ibid., 13).

Just like Blacker, McFarland's argument is comprehensive, but in his search for continuity with tradition, he is perhaps too concerned with generalisations and simplifications, and misses key differences in the movements. This can also be seen in his attempt to fit the movements into his five factors. If a comparison is made between the time in which Kofuku-no-Kagaku was established with the first factor, 'social crisis', is it possible to say that the same context applies today? If the answer is no, then McFarland's work has actually highlighted not so much continuity as diversity. It is the true complexity of the picture as well as the diversity of the movements which I shall now consider through the work of Shimazono.

The first of Shimazono's writings I shall consider is 'The Living Kami Idea in the New Religions of Japan' (1979), which offers an interesting alternative to the work of Blacker and McFarland. Shimazono argues that NRMs do not come from the established Shintō or Buddhist traditions, but rather from folk or shamanistic traditions and practices. However, whilst the folk tradition is of importance to Blacker, in relation to the characteristics of the movements, for Shimazono it is key to his ideas concerning the origins of NRMs.



It is very important to note exactly what Shimazono means when he refers to the folk tradition, because his argument depends on understanding that it can be split into two separate phenomena, the first he calls ‘folk belief’ (*minkan shinkō*), the second he calls ‘Folk Religion’ (*minzoku shūkyō*). Shimazono turns to Hitoshi Miyake for an explanation of ‘folk belief’, who describes it as the antithesis of institutional religion, particularly in relation to its lack of structured doctrine or faith (Shimazono, 1979: 390). Although this is actually Miyake’s definition of folk religion, Shimazono argues that it should be understood as ‘folk belief’ (*ibid.*, 390). By contrast, ‘Folk Religion’, for Shimazono - which he deliberately puts in capital letters in order to distinguish it from ‘folk belief’ - has its roots in folk belief, but has come into contact with historical religions, such as Buddhism, that teach salvation. He defines it as follows:

‘The concept of Folk Religion refers to a faith-system that remains related to its foundation in folk belief but, in consequence of continuing contact with salvation-oriented religion, is to some extent characterised by salvation religion-type organisations, doctrines, and rituals’. (*ibid.*, 391)

For Shimazono it is this hybrid phenomenon that provides the context from which NRMs emerge (*ibid.*, 391).

Shimazono believes other scholars to be misguided in thinking that Japanese NRMs have their origins in periods of social distress, as this would be to reduce them to a response to abnormal conditions. Interestingly, from Shimazono’s perspective, the ‘crisis’ or ‘anomie’ theories, are almost to be understood as psychological explanations, that in fact the rise of NRMs is some kind of diseased response to a particular social context of suffering, and that if that context was removed, the disease would go away. Shimazono argues instead that new religions resulted naturally from an ‘inner transformation’ of the ideas to be found in Folk Religion (Shimazono, 1979: 392), and he uses the examples of two early NRMs, namely Tenrikyō (1838) and Konkōkyō (1859) to illustrate his argument. Tenrikyō was the biggest NRM during the Meiji Period and up until the end of the Second World War and it claims 1.8 million believers today (Inoue et al., 1996: 216). Shimazono details the initial spiritual experiences of both Miki Nakayama, Foundress of Tenrikyō (1798-1887), and Bunji Akazawa, Founder of Konkōkyō (1814-83). On separate, unrelated occasions, whilst they were attending shamanic healing rituals performed within a Folk Religion, they unexpectedly became a medium for *kami* or gods (Shimazono, 1979: 393). These events were extraordinary, because in the healing ritual the communication with *kami* should have passed through a trained, officiating medium. In both Nakayama’s and Akazawa’s



cases, however, the official medium was bypassed and the mediumship was given to them instead, bystanders who were not trained in the Folk Religion tradition. It is these unexpected spiritual experiences that inspired Nakayama and Akazawa to start religions of their own. Shimazono states that this was because Nakayama and Akazawa 'failed to fit into the usual pattern of magico-religious leader. As a result, their subsequent religious acts likewise differed from those of traditional Folk Religion' (ibid., 394).

The result of these incidents is key to the origin of NRMs for Shimazono, because Nakayama and Akazawa developed an independent status that allowed them to operate in new ways. First, they provided a more spontaneous and popular source of healing than the more established and rigid Folk Religion. Second, as independent mediums and due to popular demand, they had to develop a new technique of mediumship to communicate the power of kami to people. This was because the more traditional shamanistic mediumship was a rare and incredibly physically demanding role, which needed training and preparation. Easier communication with kami was necessary and came through 'more subdued trance states' (ibid., 396). This led to another very important transformation, because suddenly the medium appeared to be less like a medium and more like the kami itself, thus becoming *ikigami* or what Shimazono calls a 'living kami' (ibid., 396).

This first stage of inner transformation of religious practice is followed closely by the development of three specific doctrines that Shimazono considers to be related to the emergence of new religions from Folk Religion. First is the idea of *Oyagami*, or 'Parent God' (ibid., 398); an all powerful controlling kami figure that people could relate to, as opposed to the many less powerful kami of traditional Folk Religion. Second is the development of saving rituals, practices that allowed the power of kami to be distributed widely without the presence of the medium. Third is the 'idea of the living kami' itself (ibid., 401), which allowed the independent medium to grow in importance such that they became the sole spokesperson for the Parent God.

For Shimazono, there is an increasing distinction between traditional Folk Religion and NRMs in this process:

'Critical in differentiating the one from the other is the presence or absence of the idea that the living kami figure is one selected by a supernatural being to serve as the sole intermediary between human and divine. In Folk Religion the belief is that supernatural beings make their wills manifest repeatedly and through many channels; in the New Religions the belief is that the kami manifests himself through the founder alone'. (ibid., 403)



This new theory certainly seems to impact on the 'anomie theory' concerning the origins of Japanese NRMs, as well as accord with Clarke's view of the complexity of the origins of NRMs (Clarke, 1999: 13). Shimazono makes it clear that he wants his arguments to be an alternative to the theories of a millenarian response to social crisis.

There is another factor that must be taken into consideration too, however, and that is all the NRMs that did not develop within this mix of folk belief and Folk Religion. As discussed above, neither the founders of Soka Gakkai nor Kofuku-no-Kagaku fit this model.

Shimazono adds further weight to the argument that millenarian tendencies were not significant in the early stages of NRMs, in his article 'The Development of Millennialistic Thought in Japan's New Religions: From Tenrikyō to Honmichi' (1986). In this article, he traces the millenarian ideas of the movements, and argues that they emerged only once the movements had become established.

Shimazono traces the millenarianism in Japanese NRMs to, what he calls, a particular 'worldview' or relationship that movements have with the outside world. For example, do they see the world as a good or an evil place, and do they feel they belong to that world, or that they hold views which the world considers strange or threatening? Shimazono goes on to say that: 'In large part, this worldview directly or indirectly reflects rapid social change' (Shimazono, 1986: 55). This initially sounds like social anomie, but the important difference here is that Shimazono sees this worldview as being entirely separate from the origins of the movements themselves.

Shimazono also points out that Japan's case is different to other occurrences of millenarianism throughout the world, because it does not have recourse to an indigenous, historical tradition of millenarianism, such as Christianity. Shimazono argues that millenarian ideas in such movements as Tenrikyō, Maruyamakyō, Omoto, Soka Gakkai and Honmichi were 'heterogeneous and, generally speaking, unorganised. This is because there is no firm tradition of systematic millenarianism in Japan' (ibid., 55). This is important because if these movements started out with only the vaguest ideas of a better world to come, this seems to undermine Blacker's and McFarland's ideas that millenarian ideas were intricately linked to the origins of NRMs. Shimazono also points out that there was no messianic figure present in the early stages of NRMs, as is characteristic of other millenarian movements, but rather the different idea of the 'living kami', as discussed above. Living kami are not the same as messianic figures, according to Shimazono, because, despite their charismatic and religious authority, they are not considered to be divine kings or queens (ibid., 55). The living kami idea, for



Shimazono, also has more to do with local and everyday problems, such as healing or guidance for family problems.

In order to develop his argument concerning the changing worldviews of NRMs that led to millenarian ideas, Shimazono charts the history of both Tenrikyō and Honmichi. Tenrikyō, as mentioned above, was founded in 1838. Honmichi was officially founded in 1925, although the founder, Ajiro Onishi (1881-1958) realised his heavenly mission in 1913. Honmichi has its roots in Tenrikyō, as Onishi claimed he was Tenrikyō's successor.

Shimazono provides both historical and scriptural evidence (the writings of the movements he analyses) to demonstrate his argument. He charts three separate phases in Tenrikyō's history: at the start of the Movement, Tenrikyō asserts the vaguest ideas of a more positive world to come. These slowly change in its second stage, and the Movement starts to see the world in a more negative, threatening and evil light. From Tenrikyō's literature Shimazono points out that there are more and more expressions of discontent with the world<sup>5</sup> (ibid., 71). This shift is influenced by two factors, according to Shimazono; first, rapid social change at the time of the Meiji Period (1868-1912) and second, the fact that the Movement not only felt it did not belong in the world, it actually started to be persecuted. This, for Shimazono, creates the worldview that perceives the world as an evil place and the Movement's relationship with that world as antagonistic. Shimazono goes on to conclude that this particular worldview leads directly to millenarian ideas. Interestingly, however, these ideas fall far short of any systematised doctrine of millenarianism, according to Shimazono, and he refers to it rather as 'a millennialistic mood' (ibid., 75).

The third stage in the Movement's development brings another shift in their worldview, this time in reverse. The Movement is no longer persecuted, and gains acceptance in the world, as it wins the right to operate legally in 1908. Significantly for Shimazono, the millenarian tendencies, that the Movement expressed at the height of its antagonism with the world, all but die out as it regains a sense of belonging in the world (ibid., 62).

---

<sup>5</sup> Nakayama's *Ofudesaki*, 'The Tip of the Writing Brush', is not written as a systematic presentation of doctrine, but as the direct communications of God presented in a poetic and often contradictory style. It is indeed possible to observe the changes to which Shimazono refers, although this is perhaps more a change in tone than substance. Parts I and II were written in 1869 and include ideas of universal salvation II:21, and both that it will come soon II:19 and step by step II:21. Five years later, when Part III was written, the tone has changed, and become more urgent, and preparation for a new world is to be done quickly III:1 and with haste III:8. This urgency intensifies and by Part VI there is specific reference to impending disaster III:88-95 and that it will consist of 'Flames of heaven, rain of fire and tidal waves in the seas ...' III:116.



Honmichi, in contrast to Tenrikyō, does come to present a systematised millenarian doctrine. Initially, Honmichi displayed the same vague ideas about millenarianism in its early period from around 1913 to 1923 as Tenrikyō (ibid., 76), but key shifts in their worldview led its Founder, Onishi, to develop ideas concerning imminent catastrophe between 1923 and 1945 (ibid., 78). Shimazono details three causes for this shift, which all relate to its worldview. The first was the tense political situation between Japan and other countries, particularly the United States after the First World War. The second was the Movement's own situation, which manifested itself as a belief that the Movement's divinity was being held back by some evil force. The third was the huge antagonism between the Movement and the establishment (ibid., 81).

To summarise Shimazono's ideas concerning millenarianism and Japanese NRMs, he has used Tenrikyō and Honmichi to demonstrate: first, at their establishment, neither movement is based on millenarian predictions or beliefs; second, millenarian predictions or beliefs only appeared in the movements later on in their development; and third, the appearance of millenarian predictions is caused by a negative shift in the movements' views of themselves, that is, their 'worldview' in relation to the outside world.

Again, Shimazono appears to offer a very strong and detailed argument, this time in relation to how millenarian ideas within NRMs evolved, and builds up a much more complex picture than either Blacker or McFarland. Perhaps the question that Shimazono's theories do not address, whilst Blacker's and McFarland's do, however, is why the movements arose in such proliferation when they did, and if they were not responding to social anomie, what caused their popularity? Perhaps what Shimazono is offering here is not so much an alternative argument, as a more complete picture of the rise of Japanese NRMs. What an analysis of the literature on Japanese millenarian movements has done so far is to build up the picture of the complexity of NRMs and their millenarian ideas. It seems possible to say that both social anomie, and the living kami idea had a part to play in the emergence of Japanese NRMs, but that is still not the whole picture.

Emily Groznitz Ooms' book 'Women and Millenarian Protest in Meiji Japan' (1993) adds further light to this topic. Ooms' work is particularly useful for two reasons, first because it is a very thorough assessment of the early years of Omoto between 1900 and 1905, and thus provides us with a very good example of a religion that arose during the Meiji Period, and second, because Omoto is, according to Ooms, the 'most complete millennial thought and action in Japanese history' (Ooms, 1993: 3).



Like Shimazono, Ooms considers the shamanistic role in the first phase of the religious experience that the Foundress, Nao Deguchi, underwent. 'If we are to understand the dynamic character and creative potential of the founder's role, we must look more closely at the ways in which it differed from that of a traditional shaman' (Ooms, 1993: 12). In order to do this, Ooms looks at the quality of the shamanistic experience itself. Ooms' argument about this religious experience or *kamigakari* (possession by a god) is that it occurs in an altered state of consciousness and is quite beyond the experience or language of the waking state. In order to articulate the experience in the waking state, therefore, a translation has to be made which becomes the creative process that results in a new religion (*ibid.*, 14). Ooms concludes that this mediation may be what can plug into the popular consciousness, and create something that people can relate to and want to belong to (*ibid.*, 14).

Another important point Ooms makes is that the experience represents a reversal of the deprivation Deguchi was subjected to in her ordinary life as the experience turned her from the 'victim' into the 'primary actor' (*ibid.*, 15). Ooms points out that such experiences allowed for a freedom to create an alternative world: 'submission to a transcendent authority actually freed them from their former subjection to the established social and religious authorities' (*ibid.*, 18), and from this freedom comes their potentially dangerous power to criticise the status quo. Ooms points out that many scholars disregard the idealism of NRMs as hopelessly out of touch with what real dissent should constitute, and, therefore, not worth studying. For instance, utopian assertions do not seem to form any kind of organised political activity to achieve their aims. Ooms argues, however, that NRMs represent a power that rewrites the rules, and therefore disempower the prevailing rules (*ibid.*, 19). This is exactly what charismatic leaders do or can do.

Although Ooms places great emphasis on Deguchi's religious experience, she also considers the importance of the context of that experience. In accordance with other writers that have drawn out the problems of the Meiji era, Ooms concludes: 'Nao (Deguchi)'s life history allows us to identify her with a class of people dislocated and oppressed by the rapid socio-economic changes that Japan underwent in the late nineteenth century' (*ibid.*, 22). Ooms goes on to argue, however, that what leads Deguchi to her revelations lies in her disappointment with the strict moral code (*tsūzoku dōtoku* 通俗道德) she had followed devoutly since her childhood; this was supposed to reward her with success and prosperity, but instead had won her nothing but suffering. Her only escape from such a no-win situation was to rewrite the social rules: 'Too proud



to accept society's negative assessment of her worth, Nao (Deguchi) instead denied the legitimacy of the social order which had defined her as worthless' (ibid., 32). She, therefore, did not reject the moral code that she had followed, rather the way society worked in relation to that code.

In relation to Omoto's popularity, the other very important element in Deguchi's experience is the fact that she gave voice not simply to her own frustrations, but to the frustrations of those around her (ibid., 33). For Deguchi and her followers it was not the moral code they lived by which had failed them, but society itself, and so it was society that became the focus of her criticisms:

'Nao (Deguchi)'s vision of an earthly paradise is clearly a religious projection of the values and way of life ideally prescribed by the *tsūzoku dōtoku*. It represents, moreover, a complete rejection of the capitalistic model of society being pursued by the Meiji state through its policies of industrialisation and westernisation.' (ibid., 46-7)

In the historical development of Omoto, one of the things Ooms highlights is the importance of a particular ritual for Deguchi and her followers, which was termed *shusshū* 出修. Its significance was twofold. First, in a Durkheimian sense it gave the movement: 'a powerful sense of group solidarity and identity' (ibid., 57), and second, it allowed for purification and a means to salvation. It, therefore, expresses some of Deguchi's ideas about millenarianism, namely that one had to be purified in order to achieve it, and second, one had to suffer in order to appreciate it (ibid., 58). Here one can see a very direct correlation between Deguchi's context of suffering and its effect on millenarian ideas.

Ooms describes Deguchi's views about the world as anti-modern and apocalyptic, and that she condemned all things modern and Western. Deguchi believed that modern civilization and industrialisation were contrary to the will of the gods, that *kanji* was injurious to the nation, and schools were evil places. In order to purge the world of its afflictions complete destruction of the world would precede the establishment of a divine realm on earth. Like Nakayama's Ofudesaki, Deguchi's apocalyptic expectation develops into a more intense prediction over time (ibid., 64). Deguchi's teachings: 'developed into a fantastic millenarian cult' (ibid., 65) which reached its peak during the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5), when Deguchi's predictions were meant to come to fruition, but did not. The Movement broke up, and Deguchi lost her influence on the Movement completely, never to get it back (ibid., 65).

Ooms devotes a whole section of her book to a discussion of millenarianism. She starts with Cohn's classical definition of five elements, but adds three more of her



own: first, millenarian movements are ‘fundamentally protests against oppression’; second, they come from those with no power, or the ‘disenfranchised’; and third, they express ‘a world view in direct conflict with the ideology of the ruling authority’ (ibid., 75-76). Millenarianism for Ooms, is therefore, essentially a battle.

Ooms’ analysis is valuable because it draws attention, in particular, to the actual experience of becoming a kamigakari, a human vehicle for the word of god, as well as to the intensity of the terrible hardships Deguchi had to bear. However, crucially, this is only part of the picture, for what Ooms leads us to is Deguchi’s total lack of power to improve her circumstances, despite her best efforts to lead a deeply dutiful and moral life. Again, although Ooms’ position clearly supports the social anomie theory for the rise of millenarianism, this illustrates a much more complex picture than that given by either Blacker or McFarland.

The literature so far reviewed would seem to lend itself best to the theory that Japanese NRMs are not so much subject to absolutes, as to diverse circumstances. The important question for this paper is what comparisons can be made between these diverse circumstances and the context that affected and still affects Japanese NRMs today.

Shimazono considers this context in a number of works (1992b, 1997b, 2001). Shimazono uses the term ‘new’ new religions to refer to movements that are not necessarily newly founded, but any new religions that have ‘flourished’ and managed to make significant developments in the 1970s and 1980s (Shimazono, 1992b and 2001).<sup>6</sup> Shimazono also refers to ‘new’ new religions as ‘post modern new religions’ or ‘new religions of the post modern era’.<sup>7</sup> Shimazono observes that the second half of the 1990s, after Aum Shinrikyō’s sarin gas attack on the Tokyo underground in 1995, was a time of what he calls ‘winter’ for not only new religions but for all religious movements, in the sense that hardly any of them made dramatic developments (Shimazono, 2001: 13).

Shimazono defines millennial thought as an expectation of an impending crisis period or cataclysm that is followed by the arrival of the Ideal World or the Kingdom of God (Shimazono, 1997b: 70) and considers these two events to be almost inseparable

---

<sup>6</sup> Shimazono discusses a number of NRMs: the Unification Church, Agonshū, GLA, two Mahikari movements, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Shin’nyo-en, The Rajneesh Movement, Aum Shinrikyō, World Mate, Ho-no-hana Sampōgyō and Kofuku-no-Kagaku. Shimazono argues that they all showed dramatic development after the mid 1970s, and are thus ‘new’ NRMs, see: Shimazono, 2001: 10-11.

<sup>7</sup> Shimazono uses the Japanese term *atarashii jidai* 新しい時代 which literally means ‘new age’. However, the term ‘New Age’ religion has a different connotation in the sociology of religion, and for this reason the translation I have chosen here is ‘new era’ instead of ‘new age’ to avoid unnecessary confusion; see: Shimazono, 2001: 12.



(Shimazono, 1997b: 70-71; 2001: 62-3). He cites Aum Shinrikyō's belief in Armageddon as a good example of this religious disposition (Shimazono, 1997b: 70). This is certainly true of some other NRMs too; for example *Sekai Kyūseikyō* (1935) teaches that 'the old house must be destroyed before the new one can be built, because the calamities are all part of God's purification' (Thomsen, 1963: 177). However, there are NRMs such as Seichō-no-Ie, for example, that anticipate the arrival of what it calls the Ideal World through the creation of more 'light' on earth. The Ideal World, called the World of True Appearance (*Jissō no Sekai* 実相の世界), is not understood to come about as a result of this disaster. This is also the case with Kofuku-no-Kagaku, as its 'Buddha-land Utopia' is believed to come about as the result of the self-transformation of individuals on earth. The apocalyptic element of its teachings (prominent in the Movement until 1996) was not related to the coming about of the Utopia per se, and is, therefore, different from the expectation of impending disaster in movements such as Omoto, Tenrikyō, Sekai-Kyūseikyō and the Dancing Religion, where ideas of the Apocalypse that would herald in the New Age were strong and especially common, particularly immediately after the Second World War (Shimazono, 2001: 62-3).

Interestingly, however, Shimazono goes on to state that the Japanese NRMs of the 1950s and 1960s were not as pessimistic about the future as later 'post modern' movements (ibid., 63). Pessimism started to creep back into Japanese NRMs only towards the end of the 1960s, and by the 1980s, the idea of catastrophic events and the expectation for the arrival of a messiah permeated most movements. It appears that the new context which made this disposition more conspicuous was the approach of the end of the Century (ibid., 63).

According to Shimazono, the 'new' new religion Agonshū (1954), is a typical example of a millenarian movement that put particular focus on the year 1999, and interwove this with the prophecies of Nostradamus (ibid., 64-5). The author Ben Goto published a book on Nostradamus in 1973, and quoted Nostradamus' famous but ambiguous prediction for the end of the world in '*The Century*', Book X: 72. The four line verse is believed to foretell that in the seventh month of 1999, the Great King of Terror will come to resuscitate the Great King of Angolmois, and around this time Mars will rule in the name of happiness (Goto, 1991a: 28-33, 157-167). Significantly, this last sentence refers to a time of peace that will follow. Shimazono observes that Seiyū Kiriya, Founder of Agonshū, understands from this prediction that:

'the end of the world will come before 1999. The domination of the Christian civilisation will end, and the Ideal World, which is based on Buddhism, will



begin. The King of Angolmois means the Buddha, with whom Kiriya identified himself'. (Shimazono, 2001: 64)

Shimazono points out that some NRMs understood the 'end' to be near at hand because of the 'wrong' way in which modern society operated, and these particular movements tended not to reflect on the trouble they caused the outside world in order to correct the evil in society (ibid., 66). Shimazono goes on to argue that this type of movement tended to legitimate the use of 'any' means, including violence and crime, to antagonise the evils of the world in order to accomplish the correction they sought (ibid., 66-7). Shimazono understands this to create a mechanism of pressure that worked on some other NRMs, which in turn became more violent and employed criminal means as well. This also acted as a 'fuel' for many members of NRMs to become more eager in their own efforts of recruitment and voluntary work, for example. During my research in Kofuku-no-Kagaku, I met a number of members who were extremely enthusiastic - businessmen, housewives, students and people from all walks of life - many of whom said to me that they were eager to change themselves, their families, and eventually to change society as a whole. However, despite the fact that the pressure to achieve this transformation seemed to be quite high, especially in the stages leading up to 1999, violence and criminal acts were never present.

Shimazono's work on the NRMs that flourished in the 1970s and 1980s is obviously dominated to a large extent by the tragic events of the Aum incident, and this is true of Reader's work as well (1995). Shimazono makes a strong link between violence and some forms of millenarianism, explaining how the end justifies any means, and that this attitude can be infectious across many religious movements. Shimazono appears to have isolated two important factors which contributed to the actions of Aum. The first is the pessimistic attitude of the NRMs which seems to have been inspired both by the unique context of the impending year of 1999 and the significance for this date that Nostradamus' prophecies foretold. The second is the pressure that was an aspect in the methods employed to stave off impending disaster. As Shimazono points out, the disastrous nature of what the members were working to avoid justified any action to achieve it, however extreme.

However, the Aum incident, whilst it attracted considerable attention, is not a common occurrence. Shimazono's ideas are, therefore, perhaps valid for the rejectionist type of NRMs only, at the same time providing a very illuminating answer as to why millenarianism in Japanese NRMs was so popular towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.



Kisala's article, '1999 and Beyond: The Uses of Nostradamus' Prophecies by Japanese New Religions' (1998) is prompted in large part by the actions of Aum, but finds violence to be less central than Shimazono, discussing instead why it occurred in Aum but not in other NRMs that shared the same context.

Kisala, like Shimazono, sees the appeal of apocalyptic ideas in Japanese NRMs in the approach of 1999 and the popularity of Nostradamus' prophecies, and looks closely at how Aum, Agonshū, Tenshōkyō and Kofuku-no-Kagaku all used Nostradamus' prophecies. He does this 'in an effort to propose a typology for interpretation and motivation that could be helpful in understanding the different approaches taken by these groups' (Kisala, 1998: 143).

As mentioned above, Japan was introduced to Nostradamus' prophecies by Ben Goto in 1973. There are three areas concerning the interpretation and use of these prophecies in Japanese NRMs that Kisala concentrates on; first, how the movements dealt with the source of the prophecies; second, the search for their meaning; and third, whether or not the movements believed the events prophesied could be avoided (ibid., 145). It is perhaps, needless to say, that Nostradamus' prophecies are open to much speculation and interpretation concerning the first two points above, and can thus be easily employed to fit different scenarios and claims. This flexibility is put to good use by all the movements, according to Kisala.

Starting with Agonshū, Kisala highlights the fact that the leader, Seiyū Kiriyaama, claimed to understand the prophecies based on his own private revelations, and that he used this claim to add greater authority to his own prophetic insights (ibid., 149). Kiriyaama claims that the prophecies foretold Agonshū's appearance at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and how the Movement saves mankind from impending disaster. This salvific idea is important for Kisala, because it clearly illustrates a belief that disaster can be avoided.

Kisala then looks at Aum, and states: 'The motivation for Asahara's volume on Nostradamus (1991) appears to be the same as Kiriyaama's, namely the validation of his own prophecies' (ibid., 150). This is perhaps not surprising as Asahara used to be a follower of Kiriyaama, and this no doubt had some degree of influence on his own ideas. Again, private insight fuels his interpretations, reinterpreting the significance of impending disaster in 1999 with his own prophecies. Significantly for Kisala, however, what starts out as somewhat similar to Agonshū's ideas of salvation from disaster, later develops into a far more pessimistic view, where the impending Armageddon cannot be avoided.



In the case of Kofuku-no-Kagaku, Kisala points out that Okawa bases his interpretations of Nostradamus' prophecies on 'direct recourse to the master himself' (ibid., 151). Kisala believes that Okawa's initial ideas in 1988 were an optimistic view of the avoidance of Armageddon, and similar to Agonshū in the sense that Kofuku-no-Kagaku and Japan as a whole would offer an alternative to the doomed progress of western culture. Although the second of these assertions is correct, and it is true that Okawa always saw the possibility of a Golden Age after a period of crisis, Okawa's predictions in 1988, when the first of his books on Nostradamus was published and which contain dire warnings of imminent disaster, actually appear far from 'optimistic'. Kisala also notes that Okawa's ideas become much more pessimistic by 1991, but significantly Okawa says of the predictions that they are only about 70 to 80 per cent accurate (ibid., 152).

Tenshōkyō also claims unique and authoritative interpretations of the prophecies. In this Movement, an ecological type disaster is foreseen, which can be avoided if enough action is taken to reverse the tide of pollution ravaging the earth.

From the above evidence Kisala draws out the following typologies. In all cases, 'the founder is presented as a prophet like Nostradamus' (ibid., 154). The purpose of this for Kisala is twofold, first, the interest in Nostradamus in Japan is such that any publication carrying his name is bound to attract a large audience, and second, because association with Nostradamus can help the movements validate their own prophetic authority. However, from Kisala's typology, it can be seen that Agonshū, Kofuku-no-Kagaku and Tenshōkyō have 'escape clauses' should their prophecies fail, that is, an idea, that accompanies the prophecies, explaining why they might fail to materialise. Aum, on the other hand, stands out as the only Movement without such an idea or escape clause, and significantly for Kisala, this leads the Movement down its very dangerous path, because Asahara is left with no alternative but to create his own Armageddon should the predicted one fail to materialise. Interestingly, too, in contrast to Shimazono's work on a movement's 'worldview' that was reflected in an increase in apocalyptic expectation, Kisala points out that Aum was not being influenced by outside events: 'Aum's increasing emphasis on apocalyptic thought predates the escalation of conflict with the larger society' (ibid., 154-5). So what was causing Aum's dramatic and dangerous shift in millenarian thought? For Kisala the answer lies in Asahara's own failures as a leader to deliver on the promises of instant psychic development for those who followed his instruction; it appears that such powers were not materialising.



By focusing on an impending Armageddon, Aum was in fact drawing attention away from this problem (ibid., 155).

There are two conclusions Kisala draws from his typologies. First, Aum could simply be singled out as an exception rather than a dangerous precedent, or second, it could be seen as a dangerous precedent, because their adoption of Nostradamus' prophecies are an exceptional use of ideas that should not be taken out of context; something Kisala refers to as 'the "hollowing out" of religion' (ibid., 155). Kisala argues that traditional faiths, by contrast, do not make the same instantly gratifying claims as the new movements, but offer hard won insight over a lifetime of dedication to meditation, for instance, as in the case of Zen Buddhism. Concerning the idea of imminent disaster, Kisala goes on to comment: 'one useful response to this situation would be to call attention to the "hollowing out" that has occurred by repositioning Christian apocalyptic ideas in their fuller context as expressions of hope against all odds in an utterly hopeless situation' (ibid., 156).

Kisala seems to have a very strong argument that highlights the difference in attitude in the millenarian teachings of the movements he is looking at. Again, the theme of diversity in relation to the common theme of millenarian ideas is very apparent. However, an interesting comparison may be drawn in relation to earlier movements in light of his typology. Ooms illustrates, for instance, how Deguchi's followers eventually abandoned her when her final apocalyptic expectation did not materialise after the Russo-Japanese War (Ooms, 1993: 65). Here was a very extreme case of apocalyptic expectation where there was no escape clause, but Deguchi's Movement, Omoto, never resorted to violence, they simply lost faith in her predictions.

Whilst I think Kisala has isolated a very interesting typology concerning the way movements deal with apocalyptic expectation, what is difficult to agree with is his ideas about the 'hollowing out' of traditional faiths. There are several problems with this, perhaps the most obvious being why there has not been more recourse to violence considering the number of Japanese NRMs with a strong apocalyptic element, like Omoto. Second, Nichiren introduced apocalyptic ideas into Japan in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century in the context of the Lotus Sūtra, whilst those NRMs that appeared in Japan before the 1970s anticipated the Apocalypse without recourse to the Christian ideas contained in Nostradamus' prophecies. Third, the blending of ideas from one culture to another is part of the very fabric of human history, and although globalisation has speeded up the process, and resulted in greater pressures, as mentioned below in the discussion on



Clarke's work, it is perhaps better understood simply as a natural part of human creativity.

Another problem is the fact that apocalyptic ideas, even within a Christian context, such as that of Mediaeval Europe, often resulted in violence; it is surely not the case that Christians have always appreciated the Christian apocalyptic ideas in the way that Kisala suggests they have: 'as expressions of hope against all odds in an utterly hopeless situation' (Kisala, 1998: 156).

Ideas that also address this modern context, but from a different viewpoint, are those of Clarke. In his book 'Japanese New Religions in Global Perspective' (2000), Clarke helps shed some light on the diversity of the arguments so far surveyed. As mentioned above, he has called for the complex picture of millenarianism in Japan not to be oversimplified by finding one cause, or even one function. He does generalise, but only in the following manner: 'At the most general level millenarianism is an ideology of change that evolves and unfolds in response to the varying conceptions of human needs, and not only needs but also aspirations, desires and hopes' (Clarke, 2000: 130). As I discussed in the Introduction, this means that millenarian ideas must be understood to be relative to their context and to change continually.

To the evolutionary nature of millenarianism, Clarke also adds an analysis of the process of globalisation, and illustrates the fact that the modernisation of Japan should not be seen as a one way process of totally new ideas that have swallowed all in their path. Rather, he argues, it should be appreciated as a 'dynamic interaction of cultures' (ibid., 3). Japan is a particularly good example of this process because some welcomed and embraced modernisation whilst others wholly rejected it (ibid., 4-5). Clarke's analysis is interesting because it illustrates the dynamism of what happened in Japan, and where there is dynamism there is also creativity. This explains the diverse nature of the millenarian movements and reminds us of the creativity of Deguchi's millenarianism, as discussed by Ooms. Clarke also cites Omoto as a particularly good example of a movement that wholeheartedly rejected modernisation (ibid., 5). Clarke also refers to Cohn's classical definition of millenarianism in relation to the millenarianism in Japanese NRMs to show that 'Sociologically, moreover, they can be described as millenarian movements in the sense that they share the general features associated with such movements everywhere.' (ibid., 136-7).

The integration of western ideas into Japanese society is a problem that Clarke still believes to be a struggle for Japan in the modern context too. Various writers, discussed above, have related this to the Meiji Period, but Clarke points out that Japan's



position as a world economic leader has kept up the pressure of the integration of new ideas (ibid., 5-6).

Clarke analyses the millenarian ideas of three movements, Omoto, *Tenshōkōtai Jingūkyō* (Dancing Religion) and *Sekai Kyūseikyō*, not to find a cause for their emergence, but rather in order to illustrate something of 'the reasons for the recourse to millenarianism in nineteenth and twentieth century Japan' (ibid., 132). In the case of Omoto he shows how Deguchi used millenarian ideas to oppose western ideals and how her ideal world was diametrically opposed the western ideals (ibid., 137). Sayo Kitamura had a different problem to address in *Tenshōkōtai Jingūkyō*, that of the defeat of Japan after the Second World War. She constructed a vision of an ideal world where the causes of war would be a thing of the past, and where Japan could experience victory in spiritual terms (ibid., 146). While Clarke draws out the importance of context in the ideas of the millenarian movements he analyses, what he goes on to point out is that general theories concerning rapid social change are not enough to explain the rise of millenarianism; it is change that brings about specific effects which should be analysed, such as change that brings about a loss of power (ibid., 176).

Clarke also has some important comments concerning the fact that the growth of NRMs has declined in recent years. One such reason, he argues, is the Aum incident, but other factors include the rapidly changing attitudes of the Japanese, especially those under 30, the economic climate which no longer allows for a life-time of dedication to one firm, and the motivation of the second and third generations, which is less enthusiastic at evangelising than the first (Clarke, 1999: 15-16).

From the literature on millenarianism so far reviewed, the dominant theme has been the complexity of the picture that surrounds an understanding of Japanese millenarianism. In order to complete my survey of the literature, I shall now turn to the general literature on millenarianism, by sociologists such as Cohn and Worsley. Before I survey this general literature, however, I shall briefly discuss the historical background of millennial ideas present in Japan before the emergence of the new religions. I shall do this in order to see if modern Japanese millenarianism is in any way part of a tradition.

### 2.3 The History of Millenarianism in Japan

One place to find millenarian ideas in Japanese history might be in the Buddhist text, the Lotus Sūtra (*Saddharmapundarīka Sūtra*). Some observers of Japanese religions, such as Thomsen, suggest that the Sūtra is in some ways similar to the Apocalypse, as it



elevates the importance of the historical Buddha and depicts him making new revelations in the context of ‘supernatural upheavals and other extraordinary phenomena’ (Thomsen, 1963: 87). Nichiren (1222-1282), a Buddhist monk who lived during the Japanese Kamakura Period (1192-1333), understood the Sūtra to be a profound revelation of Buddhist Truth. Nichiren founded his own school of thought, known as Nichiren-shū (one of the thirteen main schools of Buddhism in Japan). All Nichiren-derived Buddhism or Buddhist movements, whether new or old, such as *Nichiren-shū*, *Hokke-shū*, *Nichiren Shōshū*, *Reiyūkai*, *Risshō Kōseikai* and *Soka Gakkai* pay homage to the Lotus Sutra and have made it their core text, as did Nichiren. In one of his principal writings, *Risshō Ankoku-ron* 立正安国論 (‘On Establishing the True Teaching for the Peace of the Land’), Nichiren himself predicted the impending arrival of such misfortunes as famines, natural disasters, diseases and foreign invasion. According to Nichiren, these calamities were caused by religious teachings that were evil; he especially opposed ‘the lack of faith found in the Jōdo Shū, or Pure Land Tradition teachings, particularly its belief in the paradise of Amida Butsu (or Amitābha) which could not be realised for millions of years’ (Clarke, 2000: 135). He therefore taught in his writing that the whole nation needed to take refuge in the Truth, namely, the Lotus Sūtra, in order to bring about peace (Nakamura, 1995: 537).

Misfortunes were predicted to occur because people had forgotten the true teaching of the Buddha according to Nichiren. The idea that people had forgotten the true meaning of religious teachings and were following false religions is thus not a new concept in Japan, and can still be seen in NRMs today. Nichiren saw the world of his time as the ‘Age of *Mappō*’ (*saddharma-viprolapa*), the last phase of the Buddha’s law, the value and force of which was now dying; he taught that *daimoku*, chanting the title of the Lotus Sūtra, was the only way to overcome the negativity inherent in this dangerous phase of history.<sup>8</sup> He founded his own school of thought on this belief.<sup>9</sup> According to Nichiren, the Bodhisattva *Jōgyō* 上行菩薩, the ‘supreme leader of the *bodhisattvas* of the earth’ (Wilson and Dobbelaere, 1994: 5),<sup>10</sup> was the only being that could reveal the truth of Gautama’s attainment of Enlightenment, and Nichiren identified himself with this Bodhisattva.

In this sense Nichiren saw the world of his time to be in a state of crisis, and he

---

<sup>8</sup> Repeated recitation of *daimoku*, in this case, the seven words of *na-m-myō-hō-ren-ge-kyō*, which are an expression of the title of the Lotus Sūtra in an honorific manner.

<sup>9</sup> Nakamura et al., 1995 on *Mappō Shisō*: 495-6.

<sup>10</sup> Bodhisattvas: enlightened, compassionate beings preoccupied with the salvation of sentient beings on earth at the expense of their own salvation, from the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition.



claimed he was the embodiment of the only divinity that could lead people to enlightenment. His quasi-apocalyptic views are the central part of Nichiren Buddhism. This may be an extremely unique form of Buddhism, but not only is it evidence that millenarian ideas existed in Japan as early as the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, but it is also an important source of ideas for Japanese NRMs today. For example, Nichiren Buddhist movements, such as Soka Gakkai, or the 'Value Creation Society', believe that there is a need for a fundamental reformation of the world, which can be brought about through their main practice, *gongyō*; that is, the chanting of *daimoku*, 'na-m-myō-hō-ren-ge-kyō'.

Another historical form of quasi-millenarian anticipation can be found in the coming of Maitreya's World; this is the traditional Mahāyāna Buddhist belief in the coming of *Miroku* 弥勒, or *Maitreya*, 'The Future Buddha'. It is believed that Maitreya will descend on earth at the end of time in order to summon to salvation all who failed to attain enlightenment when Gautama Buddha was teaching. The belief in this Future Buddha and his Paradise, called *Miroku no Jōdo* 弥勒の浄土 or the 'Pure Land of Maitreya', has a long history. For example, reference is made to it in the 'Tales of Genji',<sup>11</sup> which was written around the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> Century. From the descriptions in the Tale, it is clear that this Future Age, in which everybody will be happy and satisfied, is deeply longed for in 11<sup>th</sup> Century Japan. According to traditional belief, however, Gautama Buddha predicted that Maitreya would descend on earth when he becomes 5,670,000,000 years old (Nakamura, 1962: 508).<sup>12</sup> Despite this huge expanse of time, some scholars of Buddhism, such as Williams, understand this expectation to be 'Buddhist millenarianism' (Williams, 1989: 228). From a sociological point of view, however, it is not millenarian, because there is no imminence in the prediction. The relevance of this teaching, however, can be understood in its potential to activate the belief in the imminent arrival of a saviour. This has happened on a number of occasions, most notably in the Miroku Cult of 1773.<sup>13</sup> 'Miroku' was a saviour who was believed to have appeared on top of Mt. Fuji. He predicted the coming of the "'world of Miroku'" (Miyata, 1988: 184) and in this sense, the Cult could be said to conform to the sociological definition of millenarianism.

---

<sup>11</sup> Probably the most famous of all Japanese novels, written in around the year 1000AD by a female writer, Murasaki Shikibu. In Chapter *Yūgao* in the Tales of Genji, the future age of happiness brought about by Miroku is mentioned.

<sup>12</sup> An alternative view is that the descent of Maitreya will be 5,670,000,000 years after Gautama entered Nirvana, instead of when he is 5,670,000,000 years old.

<sup>13</sup> See: Miyata, 1988: 184.



**Figure 1. Drawing of Maitreya: the Future Buddha**



出典：広辞苑第五版

Another belief, which embodies some millenarian ideas, is the traditional idea of the Buddhist saviour *Amida Butsu* or *Amitābha*, who was, and still is, a prominent object of worship in Mahāyāna Buddhist countries. In Japan this idea is seen both in the Pure Land (*Jōdo-shū*) and the True Pure Land (*Jōdo Shin-shū*) Schools of Buddhism. Like belief in Maitreya, it is believed that *Amitābha* will one day save humankind, delivering everyone to paradise, referred to as *Jōdo* 浄土 or the Pure Land, where they can eventually attain buddhahood. Faith in this ‘Saviour Buddha’ became one of the most popular soteriological belief systems in Japanese Buddhism. *Amitābha*’s ‘Godlike’ nature has been widely worshipped in Japan, and this traditional style of Buddhist worship perhaps explains why Kofuku-no-Kagaku members accept Okawa’s identity, as I shall discuss in later chapters, both as the Living Buddha and the divine figure El Cantare. Again, however, belief in the salvific power of *Amitābha* does not conform to sociological definitions, as it is neither imminent nor terrestrial in nature. The millenarian tendencies of traditional Japanese Buddhism can therefore be seen from the above discussion to be neither strong nor well defined.

I shall now look at the general literature on millenarianism, looking closely at Cohn's definition, as well as discussing the work of Worsley and Harrison, in order to make comparisons between the millenarianism of Japanese NRMs and the understanding of millenarianism in other cultures.

## 2.4 Survey of General Literature: Millenarianism as a Sociological Concept

Norman Cohn, in his book 'The Pursuit of the Millennium' (1970), points out that the original meaning of millenarianism in the Biblical context was 'narrow and precise' (Cohn, 1970: 13). That is, the prediction in the Book of Revelation (20:4-6): 'that after his Second Coming Christ would establish a messianic kingdom on earth and would reign over it for a thousand years before the Last Judgement' (Cohn, 1970: 13). Millenarian anticipation has a long history as a social phenomenon; such tendencies as the anticipation of the messianic kingdom, preceded by apocalyptic events that herald the final period of world history, along with a vision of future salvation, have been seen since biblical times.<sup>14</sup> In the Old Testament, there is a prediction that this future salvation will be brought about by God through a messianic figure. The Book of Daniel (7:1-8), for example, is typical of this apocalyptic literature, although the prediction does not foretell the arrival of a Golden Age after the Apocalypse. An extremely pessimistic view of the future can also be seen in the Book of Isaiah (24-27), which talks of the cursed people who did not live according to the law; it predicts the survival of only a few, while the rest will dwindle away (24:6).

If the anticipation of the Apocalypse followed by messianic salvation, is the vital notion of Judeo-Christian millenarianism, it can be seen to be even more prominent in the New Testament. The Gospels of Mark 13 and Matthew 24, for example, are full of this idea: Matthew 24 states:

'(24:14) And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end will come. (24:16) Then those in Judea must flee to the mountains. (24:17) The one on the housetop must not go down to take what is in the house. (24:21) For at that time there will be great suffering, such as has not been seen from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be'.<sup>15</sup>

In the Book of Revelation, the future predictions become clearer, although still in the framework of symbolism and ambiguity.

Jesus repeatedly spoke about the arrival of doomsday, that it would be a day of

<sup>14</sup> See: Cohn, 1995 and his discussion of the origins of apocalyptic faith.

<sup>15</sup> All Biblical quotations are from 'The New Revised Standard Version with Apocrypha' (NRSV), OUP.



great suffering, brought about by wars, famines and earthquakes, that it would be the worst day since the creation of the world and would never be witnessed again (Matthew, 24:6-21). His predictions become more positive: 'all this is but the beginning of the birthpangs' (Matthew, 24:8) and he predicts his own Second Coming. In this sense traditional Christian millenarianism is a belief system that involves a catastrophic period which is followed by the Second Coming of Christ.

The terms 'Millennium' and 'millenarianism' can also be understood in a much wider context however, and Cohn states that 'millenarianism' can be used as a label for 'a particular type of Salvationism' (Cohn, 1970: 13). It is here that Cohn gives the five basic characteristics to define this type of salvation that I have discussed in the Introduction (p.9), first that it is collective; second, terrestrial; third, imminent; fourth, total; and fifth, miraculous (Cohn, 1970: 13). For Cohn, any religion that satisfies these five conditions is a millenarian religion.

Cohn places the apocalyptic prophecy of Judaeo-Christian history in a very definite context when he interprets it as follows: 'Originally all these prophecies were devices by which religious groups, at first Jewish and later Christian, consoled, fortified and asserted themselves when confronted by the threat or the reality of oppression' (ibid., 19). From its very inception then, Cohn argues, millenarianism was used as a way of dealing with oppression. However, as I shall discuss below, it is not simply the oppressed but the marginalized, unrepresented, and voiceless that provide the breeding ground for millenarianism.

Cohn points out that the image and attractions of the Christian Millennium were already quite clearly presented in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century by figures such as Lactantius, the 4<sup>th</sup> Century North African Christian writer (ibid., 27-8). The phenomenon of millenarian anticipation was also prominent in Mediaeval Europe, especially between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries, and Cohn's main work and explanation of the phenomenon is based on this era (ibid., 14). During this period there were a great many millenarian movements; for example, some whose millenarianism was expressed in violent crusades abroad, others in revolutionary uprisings at home. At the same time, however, Cohn is anxious to point out that there is a uniformity to the phenomena:

'The areas in which the age-old prophecies about the Last Days took on a new, revolutionary meaning and a new, explosive force were the areas which were becoming seriously over-populated and were involved in a process of rapid economic and social change'. (ibid., 53)

Whilst poverty per se was not the cause of millenarianism, millenarians, Cohn



argues, were likely to be poor, unrepresented and marginalised because they were the people who tended to be most dissatisfied with society. They were, for example, peasants who did not have anyone to represent or protect them, with no support from any network of social relationships, unlike the craft-guilds in the cities.<sup>16</sup> A group that has no representation or no 'voice' is, therefore, a crucial factor in Cohn's analysis on the rise of millenarianism. As he states: 'one way in which they attempted to deal with their common plight was to form a salvationist group under a messianic leader' (ibid., 60).

Strong leadership is another very important element in understanding the context of Mediaeval European millenarianism, according to Cohn. Tracing the beginnings of the period that led to such large numbers of millenarian movements in the Mediaeval period, Cohn points to a context of great disillusionment with the Established Church. This in turn led to the popularity of independent preachers, who led, by comparison, a more holy or 'apostolic' way of life (ibid., 39).

Significantly, these messianic figures also, in many cases, seem to have led the way to incredible violence. This violence expressed itself initially in the force used against the Islamic 'infidel' by the crusaders, who were keen to retake Jerusalem for themselves, and establish it as a Christian city (ibid., 64). Cohn points out that this violence is a very new departure for Christianity, in relation to the coming of the Millennium (ibid., 75), and that it was not confined to the Crusaders, as the Antichrist came to be seen in first the Jewish population across Europe, and then the clergy (ibid., 80). This violent millenarianism flared up against whoever was unlucky enough to symbolise the Antichrist at the time the movements took hold amongst the people. Particularly violent examples are the Flagellant Movement of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century (ibid., 138), the uprisings led by Thomas Muntzer (ibid., 236) and the case of the Anabaptists (ibid., 255).

Cohn isolates two particularly important features in his assessment of millenarianism, first, the social context and second, the presence of strong leaders who presented a positive alternative to authority that was understood to be corrupt. Interestingly, Cohn argues that it is a particular type of poverty which breeds millenarianism, one that comes without any form of representation and where groups feel marginalised. This is a particular type of deprivation that results in a lack of voice for those who are suffering from it. In other words, the usual channels of expression are denied them, and they seek recourse from an alternative source.

---

<sup>16</sup> See: Cohn, 1970: 58-60.



I shall now look at an ethnographic example of millenarianism and the case of the 'cargo cults' in Melanesia, which first appeared during the late 19th Century. According to Worsley's book, 'The Trumpet Shall Sound' (1957), these groups had always held a belief that their ancestors would come back to them on earth one day with 'cargo', which referred to an abundance of material goods that would herald the creation of a timeless order. When Europeans with ships full of foreign goods came, this belief system was interrupted as the Melanesians came to be oppressed by the European colonials, and this triggered the emergence of a belief system in which both the cargo they were expecting and liberation from the Whites was imminent. They built airstrips (or wharfs) to prepare for this imminent return of the ancestors with the cargo, and they prepared in other ways too:

'...setting up cult-organisations, and by building storehouses, jetties, and so on to receive the goods, known as 'cargo' in the local pidgin English. Often, also, they abandon their gardens, kill off their livestock, eat all their food, and throw away their money.' (Worsley, 1957: 11)

As in Mediaeval Europe, here is a very similar illustration of the oppressor-oppressed relationship. The Melanesians had been marginalised, had no representation, and thus no voice. The description of the cargo and how it would empower the Papuans was in direct opposition to the status quo. As such, their millenarian belief system can be understood as a form of resistance against those who had taken away their power. It appears, then, that Worsley agrees with Cohn's theory regarding millenarian beliefs, that it mainly affects the disaffected poor, and in particular the poor who are voiceless and powerless (*ibid.*, 225).

If, as Worsley says, millenarianism comes mainly from this type of poverty that also means that it can affect other strata of society, and another example from Cohn's work on Mediaeval Europe, details a group that looked for a more spiritual side to the Millennium. The 13<sup>th</sup> Century group were followers of the Abbot Joachim of Fiore; Joachimism rose up in order to antagonise the official Church of the time, which was luxurious and secular in nature. One of the conspicuous movements amongst this group was the Franciscan Spiritual Movement, in which a number of noble and merchant families renounced great wealth in order to become poor; they believed that the coming Millennium was to be an 'Age of the Spirit' and voluntary poverty was considered to be one of the necessary conditions when the future Golden Age came (Cohn, 1970: 110).

Interestingly, if the nature of the Millennium is an age as described by Cohn (*ibid.*, 28-9), then it would be the perfect and ideal place for the poor, because all the



material conditions that they were lacking so badly would be completely satisfied. This would seem to contrast starkly with the Millennium that the spiritualists, such as the Franciscans, pursued. The Millennium anticipated by the poor would not satisfy those who were in pursuit of a spiritual haven, and who had already given up their wealth in order to become the citizens of the Golden Age. They conceived of a very different new age, a millennial unity of humankind in prayer (ibid., 14), not in material satisfaction.

‘The heresy of the Free Spirit’ is another good example of millenarianism, discussed by Cohn, which did not come from the disaffected poor. This group were Gnostics from the bohemian classes who sought an independent type of salvation by flying in the face of established ideas of right and wrong (ibid., 148). These examples tell us that the notion of the Millennium is understood differently by different strata of society.

Harrison, in his book ‘The Second Coming - Popular Millenarianism 1780-1850’ (1979), provides us with similar evidence, when, in the chapter entitled ‘Through a Glass Darkly’, he looks at the millenarian movements prevalent in early 19<sup>th</sup> Century Europe. Here, the followers did seem to have a voice:

‘Such evidence as we have points to support from artisans, small farmers, shopkeepers, tradesmen, domestic servants and women, together with an important minority of merchants, businessmen, clergy and members of the professions.’ (Harrison, 1979: 221)

Harrison seems to steer clear of trying to trace a concrete link between the social context and the outbreak of millenarian beliefs, which seems partly to be explained by his chapter title – ‘Through a Glass Darkly’. He does not want to draw too many conclusions with the evidence he has, because he feels it to be incomplete, and dominated by hindsight (ibid., 230). Instead, he asks the poignant question of why someone should choose millenarianism and not another solution to their problems (ibid., 222). He, therefore, concentrates on what the teachings symbolised for their followers, what actions it motivated them to take, and what functions it provided for them. The key element for Harrison, is that of change:

‘Basically, millenarianism was an ideology of change: it focused attention on the great changes which were taking place in these last days, and promised a vast transformation of the social order when all things would be made new.’ (ibid., 222)

It appears that millenarians were desperate to change the status quo. Something was wrong, which needed to be put right, and through their millenarian ideas people can



draw a clear and tangible picture of exactly what they need to make things right again. This isolates the functions of millenarianism, and hence its popularity, as well as explains its diverse nature and the diverse contexts in which it arises.

What Harrison's work also provides us with is evidence of movements that did not express their millenarianism aggressively, such as the Shakers, Buchanites, Mormons and Wroeties of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, who actively stood apart from society and created their own worlds (ibid., 223). Harrison also points out that there is no tangible link to be found in his examples between social radicalism and revolt: 'no clear pattern of switching from millenarianism to political radicalism and vice versa emerges' (ibid., 225).

Harrison concludes with a look at the function of millenarianism in relation to its spiritual and intellectual appeal. He suggests that it allows the followers to feel part of an important drama that gave much more meaning to their everyday lives than they would otherwise have had (ibid., 227). Harrison also points out that the millenarian belief system appealed to its followers, because they were dissatisfied with the establishment. The Church, at this time, was being attacked by the new ideas of the Age of Enlightenment, and was not giving the people the answers they wanted to their daily and more immediate problems. At the same time, the new ideas of the Enlightenment were difficult to understand and lacked popular appeal for those who were not intellectually minded. He says of the millenarian belief that: 'It provided an explanation of the mysteries of life to men who were dissatisfied with both the orthodoxies of evangelical religion and the claims of Enlightenment reason' (ibid., 229). Interestingly, this appears to be very much like Cohn's examples concerning the dissatisfaction people felt with the Church in Mediaeval Europe.

## 2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I began by looking at millenarianism specifically in the context of modern Japanese NRMs and from this it is possible to see that the features are extremely diverse, as are the theories that address it. There appears to be no one single view on the causes, form and content of this millenarianism. For Blacker and McFarland, the rise of Japanese NRMs is seen as a response to the modern environment, and the mechanism of the rise of NRMs within this context is more or less the same as the explanation given for the rise of millenarianism in such cases as the Christian millenarianism of Mediaeval Europe. For Shimazono, the rise of NRMs has its roots elsewhere, in the interaction of what he calls 'folk belief' with 'Folk Religion'. For

Shimazono, millenarianism is only expressed by Japanese NRMs when they begin to see the world around them as threatening. Ooms has highlighted, in particular, the importance of the actual shaman experience, which is often the initial event that leads to the founding of an NRM.

All these theories, however, highlight specific periods of time, and specific cases. The context of the Meiji Period no longer applies to Japanese 'new' new religions, and many do not have their roots in folk belief, so it is necessary to look elsewhere for an understanding of movements such as Kofuku-no-Kagaku.

Writers concerned with the period of history in which Kofuku-no-Kagaku emerged have added to the complexity of the picture, and most of the writing is dominated by the tragic actions of Aum in 1995. Shimazono and Reader look at the link between millenarianism and violence, and find it in the pessimistic context of the approach of 1999, Nostradamus' prophecies and high pressure tactics that attempted to deal with impending doom. Kisala, on the other hand, looks at the Aum incident from a very different perspective, isolating the unique nature of Aum's attitude, which led them to take disastrous actions. Clarke, taking a different perspective, sees this need for millenarian ideas in the continuing pressure on the Japanese culture to absorb new ideas, particularly in the light of its Americanisation and its relatively new place on the global stage.

In this chapter I also looked at millenarianism in Japan's history, but found that there seems to be little to anticipate the millenarianism found in Japanese NRMs in the modern era. In the survey of the general literature, however, there was much to illuminate millenarian ideas, particularly how to deal with their diversity by isolating their function in a need for change. For Cohn and Worsley, millenarian ideas have a particular breeding ground: one, usually of poverty, that has no form of representation and where people feel marginalised and left without a voice. I have also discussed, in the work of Harrison for example, that millenarians are not always poor, nor are they always unrepresented, but that what remains a common theme amongst the diversity is the desperate need for change.

All the diversity in the theories discussed in this chapter may paint a complex picture, but it also points to the value of Clarke's statement: 'At the most general level millenarianism is an ideology of change that evolves and unfolds in response to the varying conceptions of human needs, and not only needs but also aspirations, desires and hopes' (Clarke, 2000: 130). With this functional perspective it is possible to



appreciate the diversity of the movements, rather than trying to find similarities in causes and contexts where there may be none.

Against this understanding of the nature of millenarianism I shall, in Chapter VII, discuss the nature of millenarianism in Kofuku-no-Kagaku. I shall do this in order to address both how the Movement's millenarianism can be compared to the sociological understanding of millenarianism, but also, and more importantly for this thesis, how much it differs and what is unique about it.

I shall now go on, in the next chapter, to consider the methodology I have employed in my research on Kofuku-no-Kagaku.

### III. Methodology

This thesis is a sociological study of Kofuku-no-Kagaku with special reference to its ideas of the Millennium. It is concerned with what people think and feel within a millenarian context, and as such, it uses an analysis of data gathered in the field, namely an empirical approach. In this chapter I shall, therefore, describe in detail the methods used to gather and compile information about Kofuku-no-Kagaku and its followers, and in particular how members understand the nature of the Millennium in Kofuku-no-Kagaku.

Wilson, in his book 'Religion in Sociological Perspective' (1982) outlines the aims of sociology by comparing it to science:

'If by a science we mean a discipline in which empirical phenomena are investigated by methods of enquiry that are objective, in which the investigator attempts to maintain a distinct and self-conscious ethical neutrality, in which detachment from the data is maintained, and the standard methods of measurement are used, then sociology may be said to be scientific.' (Wilson, 1982: 11)

Although Wilson goes on to point out that the natural sciences do not face the same problems as sociology in relation to control over their data, a comparison with science is a valuable guide to the aims of sociological enquiry for a thesis such as this one. Wilson's comparison of sociology with science also raises the important issues of 'ethical neutrality' and 'detachment'. He discusses these issues in considerable detail in his book 'The Social Dimensions of Sectarianism' (1990), where he talks of the importance of an 'unprejudiced understanding of sects' (Wilson, 1990: 5).

I was particularly aware of the need for detachment during my fieldwork, because I was actively engaged as a member in the activities of Kofuku-no-Kagaku especially from 1992 to 1995. However, at the time I came to start my academic research in 1997, although I was still involved, I was so to a much lesser extent. In fact, I believe that my previous affiliation was a vital factor in enabling me to understand the Movement as a whole, and that my later detachment helped me to understand the Movement from a more objective perspective. I also believe that as long as the methodology employed is substantial, it is possible to observe a religious movement both neutrally and scientifically. There are different levels of membership within Kofuku-no-Kagaku, for instance, those who are fully engaged and those who are sympathisers. In many NRMs, for instance, those who subscribe to a movement's monthly journal are automatically considered to be members, but whether they are conscious of their engagement in the movement is not always considered relevant. In



the Japanese context there is a much more fluid kind of membership than that one might expect from followers of Catholicism or Islam, for example.

As someone who was initially an active member with subjective experience of the Movement and who later became an objective researcher, I believe that I was in a unique position to come close to the ideal that Wilson argues for: 'between simultaneous identification with his subjects and distantiation from them' (Wilson, 1990: 14). Puttick's systematic research into the Rajneesh Movement is a good example of fieldwork carried out from this perspective, as she changed from a committed believer before her research to a detached academic observer during her research (Puttick: 1994).

A major advantage of my sympathetic relationship with the Movement was that it gave me unparalleled access to the Movement and its members, and facilitated co-operation with officials and the administration. For example, I was given permission to conduct my research by Kofuku-no-Kagaku's Head Office in Tokyo, and especially by the Head of the International Division, Mr Yuki Oikawa, who kindly talked to the Managers of the two branch offices (*shibu* 支部) where I carried out much of my fieldwork. As a result, many of the branch office managers and other members of staff were extremely open and supportive; they addressed members when I wanted to distribute questionnaires, by introducing me and my research aims and asking people to help me where they could. They also showed a great deal of interest in my research as a whole. Mr Oikawa was also unfailingly helpful and understanding in relation to my research. Wilson discusses the importance of such co-operation to the sociologist of religion (Wilson, 1990: 8) and it was extremely valuable to my research.

Despite the openness I usually received, I must point out that I occasionally had some difficulties and limitations in relation to my research, and I, therefore, cannot say that all Kofuku-no-Kagaku members or the Movement itself are completely open to the outside world. For example, a member of staff at the Head Office told me in writing that Kofuku-no-Kagaku claims to be a very open religious movement in the sense it discloses to the public its core doctrine including, what it calls its *ōgi* 奥義, profound, important, and often described as 'secret' knowledge of the Truth. The Movement was, however, reluctant to reveal certain types of information that it considered 'delicate'. For example, the figures for the number of staff members and priests, and the number of its local branch offices. I wanted these figures, amongst other things, in order to find out the proportion of staff to ordinary members, but I was not given access to such information; I was told that the main reason for this was because it had 'nothing to do

with its teachings'. The Movement explained this by saying that it was worried about vicious sections of the media that might use such information to attack the Movement in the future.<sup>1</sup> I shall discuss in Chapters IV and VII, how Kofuku-no-Kagaku has been extremely critical of the way the mass media uses their power and influence, and how it is now extremely cautious about the information it releases to the public. In another example, I was not given access to the Movement's new Headquarters' building in Tokyo beyond the ground floor, which had previously been more open to outsiders when it was located elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> This is however, perhaps not surprising as one reason for this may be the difficulties Kofuku-no-Kagaku has experienced with both journalists and academics, particularly around 1991. Wilson talks of the tendency of a lot of movements to be either secretive (Wilson, 1990: 18) or at least wary (Wilson and Dobbelaere, 1994: 38), and I think I would have encountered more restrictions had I not had a relationship of trust with the Movement.

I based my information gathering on both internal written sources, namely, books, leaflets and various other forms of literature that the Movement produced, and scholarly works by others outside the Movement, though the latter were extremely limited in number. However, while these provided essential background this is a sociological study and not a theological one, and as such the main focus of my information gathering was not an examination of the written teachings, but fieldwork. This fieldwork consisted in particular of interviews, questionnaires and participant observation.

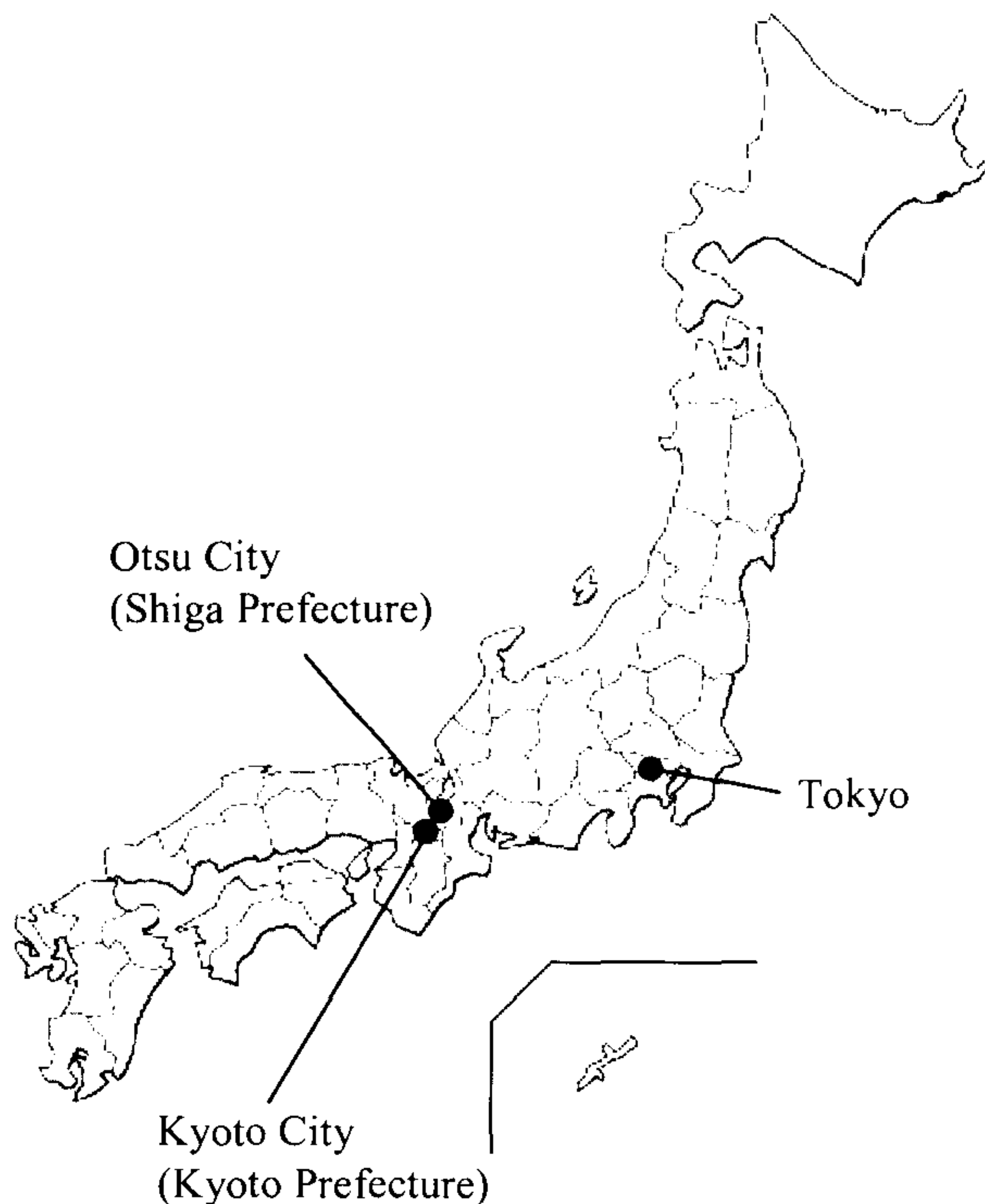
---

<sup>1</sup> I received this information in two letters from Kofuku-no-Kagaku's International Division, dated 27<sup>th</sup> March 1998 and 18<sup>th</sup> August 2000.

<sup>2</sup> I was told that outsiders are not normally allowed access beyond the Ground Floor, where there was an area provided for visitors; only members of staff had access to the higher floors.



**Figure 2. Location of Kyoto City (Kyoto Prefecture), Otsu City (Shiga Prefecture) and Tokyo**



I carried out my fieldwork in Japan and London. In Japan this fieldwork took place in three areas, namely Kyoto and Shiga Prefectures, and Tokyo, illustrated in Figure 2 left.

I chose Kyoto and Shiga Prefectures because I was familiar with these areas, and it was convenient for me to carry out long-term research there. Kyoto City is also one of the major cities in Japan and Shiga is one of the fastest growing prefectures in terms of population, as it is in the commuting area for both Kyoto City and Osaka City.

Kyoto Prefecture has a population of about 2.6 million, of which about 1.5 million live in Kyoto City, the ancient capital of Japan for a period of over a thousand years from 794 AD until it was moved to Tokyo in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century after the Meiji Restoration. One of Kofuku-no-Kagaku's branch offices in Kyoto Prefecture is 'Kyoto Central Branch' (*Kyoto Chū-ō Shibu* 京都中央支部), which is the main branch office in Kyoto City, and is located just outside the City's main railway station. Shiga Prefecture has a population of about 1.34 million habitants. Its County Town, Otsu City, is located to the east of Kyoto City and has a population of about 288,000. The largest lake in Japan, Lake Biwa, is located in the middle of this Prefecture, the size of which is about one-sixth of the whole Prefecture. Shiga Branch (*Shiga Shibu* 滋賀支部) is one of two branch offices in the Prefecture and is located in the town of Seta 瀬田 in Otsu City, and is the main branch office in the Prefecture.

I carried out my main fieldwork in Japan in Kyoto Central Branch and Shiga Branch. Both branches were large and gave me the opportunity to speak to a wide range of people. I carried out research in Tokyo as well, because it was the location of the Headquarters of the Movement, and there I met and interviewed members of staff, especially from the International Division. I also visited Tochigi Prefecture to visit its three main temples where I conducted participant observation. The main body of my fieldwork was conducted during a twelve-month period from the end of 1998 to 1999. In addition to this, on other occasions after 1999 I also did fieldwork in Japan, although

not as systematically as in 1999, in the same areas of Kyoto, Shiga, and Tokyo. This is the basis of my data collection in Japan. In London, I carried out long-term fieldwork in the Movement's European Head Branch Office (IRHH Europe), located in North London, over approximately a five-year-period between 1997 and 2002. The location of the Office has changed a few times, at one time it was in Central London near the British Museum, and then it moved to a residential area in West Finchley in North London, where it has been located for about four years, in a semi-detached house where two successive managers, who are also chief priests, and their families live, too. Over a long period, except while on fieldwork in Japan, I attended the London Branch Office on a regular basis of about once a month, this was in order to observe the changes in the Movement and keep up-to-date with their various projects, publications and activities. I listened to lectures, attended rituals and festivals, including the Movement's Birthday Festival in July, and the El Cantare Festival in December, and kept in contact with those attending the London office, especially the branch managers.

Although the major part of my fieldwork was carried out in 1999, it has been necessary to keep my research data up-to-date since that time. This was necessitated by the fact that the Movement has always undergone quite rapid transformations. For this reason I have carried on updating my research right up until the end of 2002.<sup>3</sup> This later research was primarily undertaken by keeping in contact with branch office managers, and ordinary members who could update me on any changes they were experiencing. I also kept reading the literature, including the Movement's official monthly journals, in order to keep up-to-date with its latest news, information and 'official' changes.

My fieldwork consisted of a triangular method of enquiry; I carried out participant observation, distributed questionnaire surveys and conducted interviews. Wilson notes the importance of participant observation as a sociological method of enquiry when he states: 'shared participation provides the emotional context without which sectarian values and attitudes cannot be adequately plumbed and appraised' (Wilson, 1990: 14). Participant observation is not only of major importance in its own right, but is also essential for the preparation of other lines of enquiry; in this case, the questionnaire and the interviews. It was, therefore, a vitally important part of my research.

My approach was partly Weberian although there were Durkheimian elements, too, which meant I was dealing with a mixture of methodologies. Weber's emphasis on

---

<sup>3</sup> I also refer to some issues of Kofuku-no-Kagaku's Monthly Journals from the beginning of 2003, as well as new publications, where appropriate.



*verstehen* or empathic understanding (Weber, 1949: 41), trying to see the world through the eyes of the person I was gathering information from, was particularly close to my heart in light of my previous involvement with the Movement. My methodology was, therefore, largely Weberian, in the sense that it was constantly my objective to try and see realities through the eyes of each believer, and not in my own personal terms. During large events, like the ones that the Movement held in the Tokyo Dome, and that I shall discuss below in the section on participant observation, however, I was also aware of insights arrived at from Durkheimian ideas that were manifested within the Movement (Durkheim, 1995: 44). I observed the way that vast numbers of people were, through ritual, being united and bonded together around their leader; this gave an extremely powerful sense of solidarity and belonging. It also connected with other Weberian ideas that were extremely relevant, such as the concept of the charismatic leader which will be discussed in Chapter IV.

### *Participant Observation*

In order to conduct my participant observation, I visited the Movement's Headquarters (*Sōgō-honbu* 総合本部) located in Gotanda Town, Shinagawa Ward in central Tokyo.<sup>4</sup> Gotanda is not as bustling an area as other towns in central Tokyo, like Shibuya or Shinjuku, but it houses the main offices of many large companies, as well as major banks, a number of universities and colleges, and the Indonesian, Peruvian and Brazilian Consulates are located on the eastside of the Town. The Movement's Headquarters has moved a few times since its establishment in 1986, and has been in Gotanda Town, close to JR Gotanda Station (JR Yamanote Line), since the end of 1999. I also visited the Movement's main temples and several other retreat centres called either *shōja* 精舎 or *shōshin-kan* 正心館, two in Utsunomiya City and one in Nikkō City, (both cities are located in Tochigi Prefecture about 100 kilometres North East of Tokyo), one in Shiga Prefecture and one in central Tokyo, in Minato Ward. I discuss these temples in detail in Chapter IV. As mentioned above, I also visited two branch offices in Shiga Prefecture and Kyoto. I spent my time with members in order to share in their various activities: I attended sessions such as lectures, seminars, meditation sessions and prayer rituals, including the ritual of the devotion to the three treasures - a ritual new members must go through in order to become fully devoted members - and that I shall discuss in detail in Chapter V. I attended festivals, such as the Birthday Festival (*Goseitan-sai* 御生誕祭) of the Founder, President Okawa, perhaps the most important

---

<sup>4</sup> The exact address of the Headquarters is 1-2-38 Higashi Gotanda, Shinagawa-ku, Tokyo, 141-0022, Japan.



festival in Kofuku-no-Kagaku's calendar, held every year in July, on a weekend. This festival used to be held in Tokyo Dome, one of the major indoor baseball stadia in Japan, and was broadcast live to many locations across Japan via satellite. The Movement has since stopped holding the event on such a large scale at the Dome, and it is now held on Okawa's actual birthday, 7<sup>th</sup> July, at individual events in local branch offices. The Birthday Festival at the Tokyo Dome was first held on 15<sup>th</sup> July 1991, the Movement's 5<sup>th</sup> year since its establishment and when Okawa had turned 35 years of age. On each occasion over 50,000 people attended, including the media, publishers and academics, and as far as I could tell, the Dome was always full. Many people who came but failed to get a ticket watched the proceedings on a gigantic monitor outside the Dome. These festivals generated an overwhelming sense of unity amongst the fifty thousand who came, many of whom had travelled a long way, to share in one faith and this created an atmosphere of high emotion.

The Tokyo Dome events were extremely important for several reasons: the main reason for the event was obviously to celebrate the birth of Okawa, and the members performed stage shows, including operatic performances. In addition to this, Okawa also gave a public sermon for about 30 minutes, often taking the opportunity to indicate new directions for his Movement. The contents of the sermons were sometimes revelations of some new elements of his teaching. For example, Okawa's identity as the core consciousness of El Cantare, the Grand Spirit of the Terrestrial Spirit Group, was announced for the first time during Kofuku-no-Kagaku's first Birthday Festival in 1991. The sermon was sometimes political in nature, too, as Okawa indicated where he and his Movement stood religiously, socially and politically. For example, he made criticisms about some Japanese politicians, North Korea, the *Kōmei-tō* (a political party derived from the new religion, Soka Gakkai), and the role of Japan in the future. I shall discuss these comments in more detail in Chapter IV.

Another important festival I attended was the El Cantare Festival, which was also held in Tokyo Dome every December between 1991 to 1994. As with the Birthday Festival, the Movement no longer holds these festivals in Tokyo Dome however, but in its local branch offices since 1995. The reason given for this change is that the Movement needed to become more intimate, and less public in their activities; thus they no longer invite the media and televise the events. This is expressed in the Movement as a change in 'age' from one of outward show to a more low key practice and celebration. This coincides, interestingly, with the rising hostility to Japanese NRMs



after the sarin gas attack by Aum Shinrikyō on 20<sup>th</sup> March 1995, and is something I shall discuss in more detail, again in Chapter IV.

My participant observation within Kofuku-no-Kagaku also meant that I needed to join in when the Movement engaged in various voluntary activities, for example, working alongside full-time members cleaning streets, visiting bookshops to promote Kofuku-no-Kagaku's literature (this included tidying the books and dusting them and checking stock levels), and washing up and cleaning in the retreat centres. I observed that this type of work was extremely effective in generating a sense of cohesion and 'oneness'; the participants shared a tremendous sense of accomplishment with people from all walks of life - intellectuals, unskilled workers, professionals, housewives, retired people, students, men and women, the old and the young, all working together. This is exactly what Kofuku-no-Kagaku means by the term '*sangha*', the Sanskrit term that it uses to describe the community of its followers, seen as disciples of the Buddha.

#### *Questionnaire Survey and Interviews*

The data from the questionnaires was analysed using the software packages SPSS and MS-Excel, and the main details of these results are discussed in detail in Chapter VI on the Social Composition of the Movement, and in Chapter VII on Kofuku-no-Kagaku as a Millenarian Movement. Care was taken not to create a situation where people felt obliged to answer in a certain way, which was also the case with the interviews as I shall discuss further below. I circulated 210 questionnaires and the return was 164.

The questionnaire survey is given in full in Appendix I (p.239). Although, as mentioned above, the results will be discussed in more detail elsewhere in the thesis, I shall highlight here some of the key material in the questionnaire in order to illustrate the methodology behind the questions I chose. Examples of four questions are as follows: Do you think you have changed since you joined?; If you think you have changed, how have you changed?; Why did you decide to become a member?; and, If you have any, please list two of your favourite books? In relation to the question about change, this is a very significant factor in Kofuku-no-Kagaku's teachings in relation to the Millennium, because it relates to changing the world as a whole and bringing about the Millennium by changing each individual. This is because the main method of creating the Utopia in Kofuku-no-Kagaku is associated with the mind, in other words, creating a small utopia in the mind which then expands to the family, work place and eventually the whole of society. The key method used to create this Utopia is to practise the Movement's four principles of happiness, or what it calls 'The Fourfold



Path'. For example, if a person is unhappy because they think they receive only a small amount of love in their life, they learn that by changing their perspective and giving love to others, they can find true happiness. Many people said from the results of the survey that they had changed, and that they had become kind-hearted through the teachings, for example. In relation to the question about books, this is crucial for an understanding of Kofuku-no-Kagaku, because it depends very much as a movement, on spreading its teachings through its extensive publications. This is its principal recruitment method; the publishing activities of Kofuku-no-Kagaku are one of the most important elements of the Movement as a whole. Initially I decided to ask the members to choose just one of their favourite titles, but I later realised this meant the members were more than likely to simply choose a principal publication, such as 'The Laws of the Sun', rather than a personal favourite. From the results gathered, I think my assumption was correct, because I obtained an informative picture of members' choices. As expected, the book 'The Laws of the Sun' or *Taiyō no Hō* 太陽の法 came up as the most popular choice, however, the book called 'The Laws of Eternity' or *Eien no Hō* 永遠の法, which was chosen by less than 2 per cent of the respondents as their first choice, came up as the clear favourite as their second choice. If I had not asked for two favourite choices, the popularity of this book would not have been revealed.

The Laws of the Sun is one of the most important books in the Movement because it is the first book in which Okawa wrote about his own worldview and gave a full explanation of his teachings. Although Okawa had published a number of books before this, known either as 'Spiritual Messages' or 'Spiritual Guidance', these were claimed to be direct messages from High Divine Spirits such as Jesus and Confucius, and their content is believed to come directly from such spirits and not from Okawa. 'The Laws of the Sun', on the other hand, is said to have been the first book in which Okawa was writing from his own point of view. The book focuses on 'the core of Kofuku-no-Kagaku's doctrine', which I shall discuss in detail in Chapter V, and is 'the starting point of its salvation movement' (Kofuku-no-Kagaku Sōgō-honbu, 1994: 251). The Laws of Eternity, on the other hand, centres on an explanation of the structure of the multi-dimensional universe or the spirit world. This cosmology is included in The Laws of the Sun, but The Laws of Eternity is devoted to it and, therefore, covers cosmology in much greater detail.

I also addressed the question of what members thought about the Millennium, and the apocalyptic events prior to it, and whether this created a sense of hope or fear, for example. I was careful, however, not to put too much emphasis on this topic, as I



was anxious not to influence the weight of the questionnaire too heavily. I, therefore, put questions about the Millennium towards the end of the questionnaire, or included them in other facts about the Movement.

I carried out 30 in-depth interviews in total. In order to allow for a broad spectrum of information, the interviewees I selected were approximately half male, half female, from diverse backgrounds, occupations and of diverse ages. Of those who agreed to be interviewed, four were non-Japanese and two were members no longer associated with the Movement.

The interviews were either recorded or I took notes depending on the preference of the interviewee. On a few occasions, people who did not have enough time to be interviewed kindly wrote down their beliefs, ideas about the Utopia and their own self-transformation. I have quoted some of these ideas, as well as the comments from the free space in the questionnaire, when I found them useful. In order to maintain confidentiality, the members are referred to with the letters IRH and a number, for example, 'IRH30'. Some interviewees thought I was a practising member, while others thought I was only a sympathiser of the Movement. I found that it seems to have made some differences in the sense that interviewees were naturally more open with me when they thought I was an active member. This provided an interesting contrast to the findings of both Wilson and Barker, both of whom sometimes found that their situation as a 'sympathetic stranger' (Wilson, 1990: 17) or as an 'outsider who was "inside"' (Barker, 1984: 21) allowed some members to open up and talk, knowing that the conversations would be completely confidential.

Wilson describes the interview as an opportunity to get a member's 'own appraisal of how they acquired their current commitment and just what it means to them' (Wilson, 1990: 17). This highlights the need to conduct interviews with the same principle of *verstehen* or empathic understanding that applies to participant observation. I, therefore, tried to make each interviewee as comfortable as possible during the interview, allowing them to talk freely and remaining non-judgemental either in my comments or my body-language, giving positive feedback where necessary but also being careful not to lead them in any particular direction. I wanted to let the interviewees speak in their own terms, rather than simply repeat the Movement's position. I was also conscious that it was important to give the interviewee plenty of time to answer the questions to allow them to think through the issues raised, and that I was not pushing either for clarity, consistency, or definitive answers when these were not forthcoming. Barker, during her research into the Moonies (1984), makes a very



important observation about the interviews she conducted, when she explains that it was when the interviewee thought that the interview was at an end that she often got the most revealing information from her interviewees (Barker, 1984: 18). I bore this in mind and found it to be very useful during my interviews, too.

I constructed my interviews using specific principles. First I asked myself what the purpose of the interview was; in this case I was gathering information about such things as the millenarian ideas of the interviewees, as well as information about any self-transformation they might have undergone through their association with the Movement. Second, I kept my questions open-ended to give people the opportunity to say what they thought, when not in need of precise information such as age, and marital status. I was anxious to allow the interviewees the space as well as the time to reflect on the personal meanings that were raised during the interview. I endeavoured to make sure I was clear in my mind what the purpose of each question was, and I kept the questions as simple as possible.

In relation to the questions themselves, I did not want to influence the interviewee by concentrating too much on questions concerning millenarianism, for example. This was particularly important, because Kofuku-no-Kagaku shifted emphasis away from teachings about the Apocalypse, especially after 1996, and around the time of my fieldwork talking about and dwelling on such topics was discouraged. I have discussed this doctrinal shift in detail in Chapters IV and VII. The year 1999 was nonetheless still considered to be a crucial year by many members so I included questions about this crucial period amongst other questions related to Kofuku-no-Kagaku's doctrine, and kept any questions that were directly relevant to the Utopia to the end of the interview. These questions included the following: What do you understand the Utopia to be?; (If necessary): Does the Utopia, that is, the Millennium have any particular personal meaning for you?; and When the Utopia comes, what do you imagine the world will be like?

In relation to questions about self-transformation, I asked the interviewees: Can you tell me something about what motivated you to join?; Do you think you have changed since you joined the Movement? (If yes, explore how); Do you think you have developed since you joined the Movement? (If yes, explore how); and, Can you say anything about your happiness, now you are a member (If yes, explore when and how).

I undertook spontaneous interviews as the opportunity arose during my fieldwork, the results of which I kept a note of in a research diary. I also conducted two



in-depth interviews with the Head of the International Division, and interviewed many other Kofuku-no-Kagaku personnel.

*Further methodological notes*

On a number of occasions throughout the thesis I mention the price of goods, rent and other monetary values. I always use Japanese Yen to express these values, and I also give the corresponding value in UK Sterling. The exchange rate between these two currencies has varied considerably over the term of my research, but for consistency I have used a standard flat rate of exchange of 200 Yen to the Pound.

I have supplied all photographs, images and charts that are used in this thesis, unless otherwise stated. With regard to official photographs and material that belong to the Movement and are reproduced here, I was given kind permission to use them through the International Division of Kofuku-no-Kagaku's Headquarters in Tokyo, from Mr Yuki Oikawa, Director of the International Division and Mr Teddy Takagi, Manager of the European Branch Office (2001 – ). The names of all the Kofuku-no-Kagaku staff members who were interviewed are detailed with permission.

During my research, I had invaluable assistance from the managers that ran the Movement's European Branch Office (London), as well as from Managers and staff in branch offices, temples and retreat centres across Japan. Management positions within the Movement change frequently, and researchers have pointed out this tendency for frequent staff transfers (Numata, 1995: 229); during my research I dealt with five different managers in London alone. In Japan, I experienced similar staff changes in the branch offices in Shiga and Kyoto. Interestingly, however, the Head of the International Division, Mr Yuki Oikawa, has been in the same position for many years. Before his appointment, however, this post had changed hands frequently, too. This rapid change means that I do not always refer to the managers in chronological order when discussing information they gave me.

There are very limited academic secondary sources available about Kofuku-no-Kagaku, and it has, therefore, been necessary to rely heavily on primary sources for my research on the Movement. Due to the Movement's short history, there are only four academic articles in English that consider Kofuku-no-Kagaku systematically, by Astley (1995), Yamashita (1998) and short articles by Somers (in Clarke and Somers eds., 1994) and by Kisala (1998). The situation is slightly better in Japanese, although reliable secondary literature is still very limited. Numata's book on Japanese NRMs contains a very useful chapter on Kofuku-no-Kagaku (1995), there is an article by



Yamashita (1997), an encyclopaedic dictionary on Japanese NRMs and their leaders edited by Inoue et al. (1996), a small section by Okudaira that discusses the lawsuits between members of Kofuku-no-Kagaku and the mass media from a legal point of view (1997) and Shimazono's books on Japanese 'new' new religions (1992b, 2001) contain useful discussions on the Kofuku-no-Kagaku phenomenon. However, these works focus exclusively on the early phases of the Movement's history, especially the period between the mid 1980s and the early 1990s, and do not go beyond 1995. Though slightly outdated as well as not necessarily academic, there are also some useful secondary sources written by journalists and the mass media, such as an article by the journalist Arita (1991), as well as the Niju-isseiki Bunmei Kenkyūkai (1991) and the Daily Mainichi (1992), a quality Japanese newspaper.

When I refer to Okawa's literature in this thesis, I have mainly used the original Japanese versions. There are a few translations into English, but when they are available, such as 'The Laws of the Sun' I refer to them to highlight any differences that have arisen between the original Japanese versions and the English translations. The Movement often republishes literature with slight changes both in meaning and terminology, and it has been necessary to track some of these differences, too. For example, before 1994 Kofuku-no-Kagaku used the Japanese word for 'Truth', *Shinri*, usually written with the kanji 真理, with *Shinri*, written with the alternative kanji 神理 (which literally translates as 'God's Truth' and was used in another NRM, GLA). However, after the Movement's doctrinal reformation in 1994, *Shinri* 神理 was replaced with *Buppō Shinri* 仏法真理 which literally translates as the 'Buddha Dharma Truth', although in Okawa's books in English, this term is simply translated as the 'Buddha's Truth'. I have chosen to use the term 'Buddha's Truth' to refer to this concept within this thesis in order to maintain consistency of meaning. In another change, in 'The Laws of the Sun' the word 'God' was replaced with 'The Buddha', with only a few exceptions. These changes will be discussed in detail particularly in Chapter IV.

Whilst I use some of the technical terms that are employed in the English versions of the literature where their meaning is clear, I have also used my own translations when I thought this necessary or more appropriate in certain contexts. A word that needs particular explanation is the Japanese word *kokoro* 心, which refers to a person's heart but is also used to refer to a person's mind, as well as the 'inner' self as distinguished from the physical self, depending on the context. I tend to translate *kokoro* as 'mind/heart' but where necessary I shall highlight any confusion that I feel may be caused by the fact that there is no equivalent in the English language.



In this thesis all full names are written in ‘given’ name then ‘family’ name order, although this is the reverse of the Japanese custom. For example, President Okawa Ryuho is referred to as Ryuho Okawa throughout this thesis. The name of President Okawa and the name of the Head of the International Division, Mr Oikawa, are very similar and, in order to avoid confusion as both names are frequently mentioned, I shall refer to Ryuho Okawa as President Okawa, or Master Okawa if I am considering the follower’s point of view, and I shall refer to Mr Oikawa as either Yuki Oikawa or simply Mr Oikawa.

The name of the Movement also needs some clarification. The official name of the Movement is *Kofuku-no-Kagaku* 幸福の科学, and its official English name is *The Institute for Research in Human Happiness*, sometimes shortened to ‘IRH’. In the UK, however, Kofuku-no-Kagaku is officially registered as a charitable organisation under the title ‘IRHH Europe’, while in Brazil its name is directly translated into Portuguese as ‘*Ciência da Felicidade*’. In this thesis I have chosen to refer to the Movement variously as ‘Kofuku-no-Kagaku’, ‘the Movement’ and occasionally ‘the Institute’ where appropriate.

Although the main results of my fieldwork are discussed in Chapter VI and VII in particular, I shall use my research as a source of information about Kofuku-no-Kagaku throughout this thesis, including its History and Development, which I shall now discuss in the following chapter.

## IV. An Overview of the History of Kofuku-no-Kagaku

### 4.1 Contents of Chapter

In this chapter I shall discuss the history of the Movement. I will begin, however, with a brief review of the life of the founder, Ryuho Okawa, up to his foundation of the Movement in 1986, and I shall also include an overview of the organisational structure of the Movement. I rely heavily on primary sources for this overview, most of which are in Japanese, because there is no up-to-date historical study of Kofuku-no-Kagaku available so far. These primary sources are Okawa's own writings, a number of other publications by the Movement, and interviews I have conducted with staff, and ordinary members. I am also using a limited amount of secondary academic sources, namely Somers (1994), Numata (1995), Astley (1995) and Yamashita (1997); Somers' history goes up to 1992, Astley's history is from a similar period, with some updating to 1995, and Yamashita's history goes up to 1997. As these histories only go up to around the mid 1990s, however, they either do not include, or say very little about some very important developments in the Movement's history, which include its 'doctrinal reformation', its shift away from emphasis on apocalyptic expectation in 1996, and its 'Building Period' which began in 1996. Other important developments include its increasingly Buddhist orientation. It is the aim of this chapter to offer a more detailed history of Kofuku-no-Kagaku and to bring an account of its history up to the present day.

### 4.2 A Brief Review of the Life of the Founder, Ryuho Okawa, up to the Foundation of the Movement in 1986

Kofuku-no-Kagaku 幸福の科学, the Institute for Research in Human Happiness (IRH), was established in Tokyo by a former businessman, Ryuho Okawa 大川隆法 when he was 30 years of age, in October 1986. Okawa was born on 7<sup>th</sup> July 1956, in Tokushima Prefecture, which is situated on the east side of Shikoku Island, South West of Tokyo, in Japan. He reveals in *The Departure from Mediocrity*, (1991d)<sup>1</sup> that he was raised in a religious family, as both his parents believed in God and the Buddha, and for Okawa the existence of spirits and souls was a matter of course (Okawa, 1991d: 71). Although he had a belief in the spirit and the world after death in his childhood, he was not

---

<sup>1</sup> The original Japanese title is '*Heibon kara no Shuppatsu*' 平凡からの出発, first published in 1988 by Tsuchiya Soten, and then by Kadokawa Shoten in 1991. I am using the 1991 edition, and have translated the title literally as 'The Departure from Mediocrity'. This book was revised in 2002 and given the new title '*Wakaki-hi no El Cantare*' or 'The Early Days of El Cantare' (my own translation), and is available to Kofuku-no-Kagaku members only.



particularly active in religious practice. He had an older brother, and the two boys were raised in a not particularly well-off, ordinary, if fairly strict home environment. At the age of around ten, Okawa used to dream of one day becoming either an academic or a diplomat. He wanted either to spread his own thought into the world by living in an academic environment, or to broaden his outlook in different cultures by becoming a diplomat (ibid., 13).

During his secondary education, Okawa appears to have been an active and engaged student. He enjoyed fishing, playing tennis and practising *kendō*. He was also involved in school activities; he became president of the student union and editor of the school newspaper.<sup>2</sup> As a child Okawa had a number of spiritual experiences; at elementary school, he claims to have undergone ‘astral travel’ several times, and to have seen Heaven and Hell. Okawa says, he ‘possessed a strong predisposition towards, and sensitivity for, spiritual matters’ (Okawa, 1994d: 351; 1996b: 138) at that time. He continued to show a strong interest in spiritual matters while he was at university and read spiritual and religious books, for example, that led him to clearer religious experiences that began in March 1981.

Okawa’s father, Saburō Yoshikawa 善川三朗 (1921-2003), is often mentioned as one of the most important influences on Okawa’s life. Okawa admits that despite having no religious or spiritual master himself, the influence of his father during his childhood was extremely important (Okawa, 1991d, Ch.4:2: 117-8). Yoshikawa, whose real name was Tadayoshi Nakagawa, edited journals for the Japanese Communist Party for a time and later worked in local government, as an agricultural advisor (Inoue et al. eds., 1996: 369-70). He had a strong interest in spirituality and religious thought, and studied in the Christian Church when he was a teenager. He also studied in a new religion, Seichō-no-Ie (House of Growth)<sup>3</sup> soon after the Second World War, and later became a sympathiser of the teachings of Shinji Takahashi from God Light Association<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> The details of Okawa’s life prior to the establishment of Kofuku-no-Kagaku can be found in ‘*Heibon kara no Shuppatsu*’, 1991d; ‘The Laws of the Sun’, 1994d: 334-367; 1996b: 131-145. The original version of ‘The Laws of the Sun’ was published in Japanese in 1987, a year after the establishment of the Movement, and was replaced with a revised version after Kofuku-no-Kagaku’s major doctrinal reformation in the spring of 1994. I am using the 1994 Japanese version here, but where there are differences between the old and new versions, I shall draw attention to this. I shall also give the reference of the English versions of the book (IRH Press, 1991 and Element 1996), after the Japanese reference, in order to help the non-Japanese reader.

<sup>3</sup> Seichō-no-Ie was founded by Masaharu Taniguchi (1893-1985) in 1930.

<sup>4</sup> GLA (God Light Association) is a Japanese new religion that was established in 1969. The Founder, Shinji Takahashi (1927-1976), was believed to be the reincarnation of the Buddha by the Movement, and later to be the incarnation of the Grand Spirit ‘*El Ranty*’, understood to be one of the ten Highest Spirits along with Jesus, Moses, and Confucius for example. See: Okawa, *Eien no Hō*, 1997, Ch.6. I shall discuss El Ranty below (p.78-80).



(GLA).

In 'The Departure from Mediocrity' (Ch.4:2), Okawa also reveals that his father used to give hour-long lectures to him and his brother after supper at home, on subjects such as the Bible, Zen Buddhism, and on secular topics, such as Kantian philosophy and the Communist Manifesto. Okawa believes that the foundation of his thought must have been derived from these lectures when he was aged between nine and eleven (Okawa, 1991d: 111-8). Okawa suggests that the family environment is vital for children to develop a religious disposition during the early process of personality formation, and that teaching the importance of belief in God and spirituality to children is the most important task of all for any parent (ibid., 107-9). Okawa believes that he naturally believed in God as a child principally because his parents did (ibid., 107).

Okawa was a successful student at school, and was especially good at English. He went on to enter the University of Tokyo, where he read law and politics. At university, he initially felt ill at ease amongst the many brilliant students from all over the country who showed little interest in the spirit. As a student, Okawa is said to have spent a considerable amount of time reading, writing poems, walking and fishing, and it was around this time that he started reading philosophy, including Plato and Kitarō Nishida.<sup>5</sup> Before his first spiritual discourse with high spirits began, Okawa had undergone some distressing times during university life, including relationship problems and failing his National Bar Examinations; his interests began to change from philosophy to metaphysics, and he read the works of Shinji Takahashi of GLA<sup>6</sup> and of Masaharu Taniguchi of Seichō-no-Ie. He then came to the realisation that no one could control another person's mind, but everyone has the capacity to control their own mind (ibid., Ch.4:5: 126-134). This realisation was significant because from it Okawa came to formulate his key ideas concerning the development of happiness taught in Kofuku-no-Kagaku.

---

<sup>5</sup> Kitarō Nishida (1870-1945), Founder of the Kyoto School of philosophy.

<sup>6</sup> During his final year at university in January 1981, Okawa discovered one of Takahashi's main books, *'The Discovery of Mind' (Kokoro no Hakken Shinri-hen 心の発見 神理篇)*, first published in 1971. Okawa had a strong feeling that 'The God's Truth', referred to in the book, was familiar to him although he had never heard it before (Okawa, 1991g: 245). Okawa is said to have received many messages directly from the 'spirit' of Takahashi after he started to receive spiritual messages in 1981, and published over ten books of 'direct messages' from Takahashi's 'spirit', between 1986 and 1991. Taking this connection into consideration, as well as analysing similarities in the structure and terminology used in GLA and Kofuku-no-Kagaku, some, such as Inoue (1992: 29) and Numata (1994: 88-90), have pointed out that Okawa was influenced by Takahashi. Okawa and Kofuku-no-Kagaku clearly denied such views after the Movement's major doctrinal reformation, after May 1994, when it categorised GLA as a 'Minor Heaven Religion' (discussed below (p.80) and in Chapter VIII (p.216-219). Since then the Movement has been extremely critical of Takahashi and GLA. See: 'Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly', No.87, 5/1994: 4-24; Okawa, 1994d: Ch.6, Section 9 and 10; 1996b: Ch.7.



On 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1981, shortly before graduating from university, Okawa experienced his first discourse with a high divine spirit (*Kōkyū Shinrei*: 高級神霊), which is said to have been the spirit of *Nikkō* 日興, one of the six main disciples of Nichiren.<sup>7</sup> Okawa was 24 at this time. It was a warm afternoon in early spring, and Okawa recalls the experience as follows:

‘Suddenly I sensed an invisible presence with me in the room, and almost simultaneously understood by intuition that whatever it was wished to communicate with me. I ran to get a pencil and some blank cards. My hand holding the pencil began to move as if it had a life of its own. On card after card it wrote the words, ‘Good News’, ‘Good News’.

‘Who are you?’ I asked. My hand signed the name ‘Nikkō’. I was experiencing automatic writing under the control of Nikkō.’ (Okawa, 1994d: 348-9; 1996b: 137-8)

About a week later, the spirit of Nichiren himself started contacting Okawa. After this event took place, Okawa says, they communicated every day from March to July, 1981, a time when his everyday life was immersed in the business world. Okawa asked the spirit that claimed to be Nichiren, what mission he should expect to undertake in life. The spirit’s reply to Okawa was: ‘Love others, nurture others, and forgive others’.<sup>8</sup>

Okawa kept receiving spiritual messages such as these, and in June 1981, he is said to have started receiving messages from Jesus. He states:

‘In June 1981, the spirit of Jesus Christ came down to tell me something absolutely extraordinary. He spoke with a trace of a foreign accent, but what he said was full of powerful sincerity and utter love. My father was with me at the time, and the presence of a spirit from so high a dimension bereft him of speech. When a high spirit makes an earthly appearance in this way, it is within a numinous radiance that causes one’s own body to become very warm, and the words it speaks are so filled with truth and light that one is moved to tears.’ (Okawa, 1994d: 362; 1996b: 143)

Through these continuous religious experiences, Okawa tells us that he gradually became aware that he was the reincarnation of Gautama Siddhartha ‘The Buddha’ and, more importantly, the incarnation of the Highest Spiritual Being, called *El Cantare*, known as the *Lord El Cantare* within Kofuku-no-Kagaku.<sup>9</sup> This Being is believed to be

---

<sup>7</sup> See: Chapter II, (p.37-8)

<sup>8</sup> Okawa, 1991d, Ch.6:3; 1994d: 351; 1996b: 138-9; Nijū-isseiki ed., 1991: 30

<sup>9</sup> ‘*El Cantare*’ means ‘beautiful land of light, Earth’. Okawa is believed to have been reincarnated several times on earth before his present incarnation; for example, as La Mu (in Mu: c.17,000 years ago), as Thoth (in Atlantis: c.12,000 years ago), as Rient Arl Croud (in the Inca Empire: c.7,000 years ago), as Ophealis (in Greece: c.6,500 year ago), as Hermes (in Greece: c.4,300 years ago), as Gautama Siddhartha (in India: c.2,500 years ago), and as Ryuho Okawa (in Japan: 1956- ). See: Okawa, 1994d: 362-3; 1996b: 143.



the Supreme Grand Spirit of the Terrestrial Spirit Group and I discuss the identity of El Cantare in Chapter V (p.118). Okawa believes that this information was revealed to him by the consciousness of Gautama the Buddha.<sup>10</sup> El Cantare's role is twofold according to Okawa: first, as the Saviour of mankind in the same way that *Amitābah Buddha* is considered to be, and second as *Mahāvairocana*, that is, as the essence of the Buddha which represents enlightenment (Okawa, 1994d: 363; 1996b: 143). From this revelation, Okawa realised that his mission of salvation of all living creatures was to spread Truth on earth.

Despite his spiritual experiences, Okawa's everyday life continued as normal. After graduating from university, he was employed by *Tōmen*, one of Japan's major trading houses. His secular life as a businessman went well, and included a period, between 1982 to 1983, when he was sent to the company's U.S. headquarters located in the World Trade Centre in New York. His communication with high spirits continued despite his life in the business world, and he would sometimes wonder whether his business life was reality, or whether what he heard from the high divine spirits was reality.

Okawa went on to communicate with many high divine spirits and recorded the content of these dialogues, while his father, Yoshikawa, was to become the first person to help Okawa, as it was he who taped, edited and arranged the publication<sup>of</sup> a vast amount of these spiritual dialogues, allowing Okawa to continue with his life as a businessman. Without Yoshikawa's help during the early 1980s, Kofuku-no-Kagaku's activities might have begun very differently and at a much later date, or they might not even have started at all. After Kofuku-no-Kagaku was established in 1986, Yoshikawa also played an important role as the Movement's official adviser in its first few years.<sup>11</sup>

The edited material from the dialogues was taken to the publisher *Chōbunsha* 潮文社, chosen because they specialised in spiritual titles. Okawa's first thirteen books, published between 1985 and 1987, were either referred to as 'spiritual messages' or

---

<sup>10</sup> The concept of the soul is a complex one in Kofuku-no-Kagaku. According to its doctrine, a soul has five other 'soul-brothers' or 'soul-sisters', and each one is alternately reincarnated on earth from time to time. Each soul-brother's individual experience on earth can be shared with the other five. This is because all six soul-brothers are identical even though they are six individual souls. For example, Gautama Buddha is believed, in Kofuku-no-Kagaku, to be the reincarnation of the Greek figure Hermes, but at the same time these two figures have different personalities and can therefore communicate with Okawa separately. However, both Hermes and Gautama are believed to be the past existences of Okawa himself. This is the reason why the consciousness of the Buddha can communicate with Okawa, even though Okawa is believed to be his reincarnation. See: Okawa, 1994d: 84-9; 1996b: 29-32; Kofuku-no-Kagaku ed., 1994: 161-2.

<sup>11</sup> Yoshikawa was known as '*Meiyo Komon*' or Hon<sup>u</sup>orable Adviser. A memorial shrine for Yoshikawa was opened in January 2003. See: 'Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly', No.191, 1/2003: 32.



‘spiritual guidance’ from high divine spirits<sup>12</sup>, and included figures such as Kūkai<sup>13</sup>, Jesus, Confucius, Socrates, and *Amaterasu O-mikami*, the Shinto Sun Goddess. The first eight publications, which included ‘*The Spiritual Messages of Nichiren*’ (1985) and ‘*The Spiritual Messages of Christ*’ (1986)<sup>14</sup>, were published under Yoshikawa’s name, due to Okawa’s work at the Trading House.

The final two spiritual messages were published at the beginning of 1991, and are important for this thesis because they contain a lot of millenarian predictions. These were ‘*The Great Warning of Allah*’ (January 1991) and ‘*The Terrifying Revelations of Nostradamus*’ (February 1991); both books became best-sellers in Japan in 1991 and I shall discuss their content in detail below. The reason why Okawa published so many spiritual messages, up until 1991, was in order to prove the existence of the Spirit World to the public, by revealing so many different characters and ‘personalities’ of high divine spirits (Kofuku-no-Kagaku ed., 1994: 130-4). After 1991, however, apart from the Buddha’s messages, virtually all other spiritual message books were discontinued, the significance of which I will discuss below.

In relation to these messages, up until 1991, the Movement had what might be called ‘shamanic’ elements. Although these do not accord with Blacker’s and Shimazono’s ideas concerning the relationship between NRMs and folk religion, as discussed in Chapter II, in this one respect Okawa does seem to have been greatly influenced by religious experiences, and these eventually led him to start his Movement. During the early days, too, the Movement had elements of mediumship and divination.

Okawa remained as a businessman for over five years, until June 1986, when the spirits of Nichiren, Jesus, Amaterasu O-mikami, and others are all said to have come to him to persuade him to leave his work immediately. He compared this event to the one that took place when Gautama was told to start preaching after attaining Enlightenment by the deity *Brahmā*. Okawa concluded that it was time for him to concentrate on starting a movement that was concerned with human happiness. He reveals how much it meant to him to leave his career and everything else that he had been living with in

---

<sup>12</sup> These include: Nichiren (August 1985), Kūkai (November 1985), Jesus Christ (January 1986), *Amaterasu O-mikami* (March 1986), Socrates (June 1986), Ryōma Sakamoto (July 1986), Himiko (October 1986), Shinji Takahashi (December 1986), and Confucius (January 1987). Many more ‘spiritual messages’ were published up until 1991, and included Archangel Michael as well as other Japanese figures such as Shinran (1173-1262), and Masaharu Taniguchi (1893-1985), Founder of Seichō-no-Ie. Messages came to Okawa from non-religious figures, too, such as Isaac Newton, Beethoven, Picasso, Florence Nightingale, and Nostradamus, all of whom were considered to be ‘guiding spirits’ *Shidō-rei* 指導霊.

<sup>13</sup> The founder of the Shingon School of Buddhism in Japan, 774-835.

<sup>14</sup> These titles are available in Japanese only. The original titles are ‘*Nichiren no Reigen*’ 日蓮の霊言 and ‘*Kirisuto no Reigen*’ キリストの霊言, both published by Chōbun-sha.



the secular world, such as his work responsibilities, his colleagues, personal friends and his future career ambitions (Okawa, 1991d: 193). He left the Trading House on 15<sup>th</sup> July 1986. He had just turned 30. Okawa refers to this departure as his ‘second death’, his ‘first death’ having already come to him when he was 24 years old, when his communication with high divine spirits began. This first development also obliged him to ‘leave’ the secular life he had been leading up to that point (ibid., 175).

On 6<sup>th</sup> October 1986, Okawa opened the first office for his Movement in Suginami Ward, Tokyo, with four members of staff, and officially started the Kofuku-no-Kagaku Movement. The name ‘Kofuku-no-Kagaku’ came from inspiration Okawa claimed to have received from the spirit of Nichiren, the details of which he published in his first book ‘The Spiritual Messages of Nichiren’, in 1985. When the Movement was formed, it was initially made up of the readers and sympathisers of Okawa’s spiritual publications. In this sense, from its inception, the study group was religious in its orientation, and recognised itself as such:

“The Institute for Research in Human Happiness (IRH), Kofuku-no-Kagaku in Japanese, is an organisation of people who aim to cultivate their souls and deepen their wisdom. It spreads the light of Truth with the aim of creating utopia, an ideal world on earth.

The teachings of IRH are based on the spirit of Buddhism. The two main pillars are the attainment of spiritual wisdom and the practice of “love that gives”. Members learn Buddha’s Truth (the Law) through books, lectures and seminars to acquire knowledge of a spiritual view of life and the world. They also practise meditation and self-reflection daily, based on the Truth they have learned; this is the way to develop a deeper understanding of life and build characters worthy of being leaders in society who can contribute to the development of the world.

IRH also presents perspectives on the future. As humanity embarks on a new millennium, we are faced with the need to change the value systems that have brought about success in the past. Through the study and practice of Buddha’s Truth, we can take part in a true prosperity that will flourish from the 21<sup>st</sup> Century onwards. This prosperity, based on spiritual values, will enable the happiness of individuals to be in harmony with that of society. Only when people awaken to this Truth can they find a way towards this bright future and a utopia on Earth.

(‘IRH Monthly’, No.95: 22, Kofuku-no-Kagaku’s monthly journal in English)

The Movement initially used the longer name ‘Kofuku-no-Kagaku, The Postgraduate School of Human Life’, *Jinsei no Daigaku-in: Kofuku-no-Kagaku* 人生の大学院 幸福の科学. Later, when it obtained legal status as a religious body in 1991, it dropped the second half of this name and became known as Kofuku-no-Kagaku. This was probably because the Movement intended to be identified as a religious Movement



rather than a study group. After it obtained legal status as a religious body, Kofuku-no-Kagaku also sometimes refers to itself as ‘Religious Corporation – Kofuku-no-Kagaku’, *Shūkyō Hōjin Kofuku-no-Kagaku* 宗教法人 幸福の科学. The English name, ‘The Institute for Research in Human Happiness’, retains the initial study nature of the Movement, and has not been changed. Today, however, Kofuku-no-Kagaku does not appear to use its English name or its abbreviation, IRH, as much as it used to, and instead uses its Japanese name, Kofuku-no-Kagaku, more. This applies to virtually all its overseas branches.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1986, Okawa appeared in front of a small audience for the first time and gave his first sermon in front of about 80 sympathisers in Tokyo. The 23<sup>rd</sup> of November has since come to be considered one of the most important dates in the history of Kofuku-no-Kagaku. It is known as the day of *Shoten-bōrin* 初転法輪, (The First Turn of the Wheel of the *Dharma*) which means the day that the ‘Wheel of the Law’ (*hōrin*), started to ‘turn for the first time’ (*shoten*). This is a Buddhist expression where the ‘Law’ is understood to be teachings, in this case Okawa’s teachings, and the ‘turn’ is understood to be their introduction into the world.

It is important to note that a review of Okawa’s early history taken from the Laws of the Sun reveals some differences between the first version, which appeared in Japanese in 1987 and the revised Japanese version, 1994, as there is material in the original publication that does not appear in the revised version, and vice versa. For example, the original version states that Okawa failed his university entrance exam on his first attempt, and also that he failed in his ambition to become an academic at Tokyo University (Okawa, 1991g: 243), and this does not exist in the 1994 version. New to the 1994 version is Okawa’s interpretation of his thwarted ambitions as the work of high divine spirits, who closed the door on his plans in order to steer him towards a spiritual path (Okawa, 1994d: 345-6; 1996b: 136). Some, like Shimazono and Numata (1995) usually rely more heavily on the first version than on the second (Shimazono, 2001: 216), as they tend to look at the earlier phase of the Movement.

The period from 1981 to 1986 marks what I call the ‘First Phase’ of Kofuku-no-Kagaku’s history, a time when Okawa became aware of his mission, and published his earliest spiritual books. An analysis of the history of the Movement from this date, reveals another four distinct phases. I have labelled all five phases as follows: First Phase, Spiritual Awakening and Spiritual Book Publication; Second Phase, Study and Consolidation (1987 to 1989); Third Phase, Missionary Work in Japan (1990 to 1993); Fourth Phase, Missionary Work Abroad and Moral Protest at Home (1994 to 1996); and



Fifth Phase, Preparation for the Coming Age (1997 to 2002). I shall now go on to review the latter four phases.

### 4.3 The Development of the Movement (1986 to the Present)

#### *Second Phase, Study and Consolidation (1987 to 1989)*

Soon after the establishment of the Movement, Okawa made his first appearance as Founder of Kofuku-no-Kagaku on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1986 when he delivered his very first sermon in Tokyo, in front of some 80 guests. He then gave what is recognised as his first official, large scale public lecture, entitled ‘The Principles of Happiness’, in March 1987, before an audience of about 400 people. In this lecture, Okawa already implied that he was a prophet by claiming that while it was impossible for spiritual mediums and psychics to hear the voice of God, prophets could hear them. He went on to say that the task of a prophet is to listen to the voice and spread the word of God.<sup>15</sup> Okawa also explained that the early years of Kofuku-no-Kagaku would be characterised by a period of study (Okawa, 1990b: 50-4).

In April 1988, Okawa married Kyōko Kimura 木村恭子, born on 22<sup>nd</sup> August, 1965, also a graduate of the University of Tokyo, where she had read English literature. Okawa says that his marriage with Kyoko provided his life ‘...with a stable basis that enabled me to concentrate even more on my task’, and he goes on to say that the marriage ‘turned out also to be instrumental in the development of the organisation’ (Okawa, 1994d: 368; 1996b: 146). For example, Kyoko became the Presidential Assistant of Kofuku-no-Kagaku in 1988, and is currently Head of Kofuku-no-Kagaku’s Women’s Division, known as the ‘Society of Aphrodite’ (*Aphrodite-kai* アフロディーテ会). Okawa also reveals that he and Kyoko were together in some of their previous lives, too.<sup>16</sup> Okawa and Kyoko now have five children.

The size of Okawa’s audience at his lectures expanded rapidly as the number of registered members of his Movement increased. The audience of 400 at his first public lecture in 1987 had grown to 10,000 by 1990. The Movement’s growth was rapid, and in December 1989, after only the third anniversary of its establishment, Kofuku-no-

---

<sup>15</sup> See: Okawa, ‘*Kōfuku no Genri*’ 幸福の原理 or ‘*The Principles of Happiness*’, 1990b, 38-39; Nijū-isseiki ed., 1991: 37-8. By ‘God’, Okawa probably means ‘High Divine Spirits’ as well as the Creator God, because he mentions Archangel Gabriel, who brought messages to Prophet Mohammed, and the spirit of Nichiren, who spoke to Okawa; both these figures are understood to be high divine spirits.

<sup>16</sup> According to Okawa, Kyoko has been with him in many of her previous lives, including in Atlantis, in the Inca Empires and in Ancient Greece (Okawa, 1994d: 368; 1996b: 146). For example, when she was in Greece she was Aphrodite (the figure from Greek mythology who lived some 4,300 years ago), who was saved from captivity by Hermes. In a change to the mythological story, however, these two figures are believed to have married and had a son, *Eros*. Kyoko’s other incarnations include *Mañjushrī* in India and Florence Nightingale in England (1820-1910).



Kagaku's Headquarters was moved to one of Tokyo's most expensive business buildings in *Kioi-chō*, Chiyoda Ward, adjacent to the City's main business and political area. The rent is said to have been twenty five million yen, approximately £125,000 (£1 to ¥200), a month.<sup>17</sup> The Movement's first monthly journal '*Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly*' came out in April 1987.

The first three years, spanning 1987 to 1989 was also typified by an emphasis on study for the members; this involved intense and structured study of Okawa's teachings, and a considerable number of examinations, discussed in Chapter VI. Kofuku-no-Kagaku's emphasis on study was aimed both at consolidating the foundations of its doctrine amongst its members, educating future teachers, and training the management of the Movement. It is also important to point out the effect that Okawa's spiritual writings had on his Movement at this stage. As discussed above, Okawa was publishing a large amount of 'spiritual messages' from both religious and non-religious figures. These figures were an important part of the Movement and gave it a very eclectic approach in its early years, something which was to completely change after May 1994, as I shall discuss below. It was quite usual for members to talk about which high divine spirit had influenced them most, and it was common for members to talk about their admiration for a particular divine figure, such as Jesus. The Movement's main prayer book also contained many prayers which addressed various divine spirits, such as Jesus, Moses and Izanagi no Mikoto, and the style of the language in the prayer and ritual that accompanied it changed according to the religious tradition that the divine spirit came from. For example, when the prayer was dedicated to a Shintō god, the participants were supposed to address the deity with the traditional Shintō hand claps and bows.

Although initially a study movement, Kofuku-no-Kagaku had a considerable spiritual element from its inception, both from Okawa's spiritual messages, and its orientation as a Buddhist-based Movement. At the end of 1989 Okawa revealed that he was the reincarnation of the Buddha, and started to emphasise the importance and significance of 'faith' in the Buddhist idea of the 'Devotion to the Three Jewels', namely, the *Buddha*, the *Dharma*, and the *Sangha*.<sup>18</sup>

Although Okawa had talked a great deal about the secrets of the spirit world and the workings of reincarnation by this time, his own personal history of previous lives had not been disclosed officially, but had instead been referred to 'unofficially' by some

---

<sup>17</sup> Nijū-issei ed., 1991; 81; *Kofuku-no-Kagaku's 3<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary Book*, 1989: 118-9

<sup>18</sup> '*Kofuku-no-Kagaku 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Book*', 1996: 36; '*Devotion to the Three Jewels*' was mentioned for the first time in a series of four seminars on the '*Noble Eightfold Path*' in 1989.

leading members of the Movement.<sup>19</sup> However, with the publication of ‘The Rebirth of Buddha’ (1989)<sup>20</sup>, one of Okawa’s most significant books, came Okawa’s first official declaration that he was the reincarnation of *Shakyamuni*, the Buddha. In ‘The Rebirth of Buddha’, he states:

‘O, each monk and nun  
Do you recognise my voice?  
You must all have heard my voice before.  
In the past few thousand years, few hundred-thousand years, and few million years,  
You have been reincarnated on earth with me  
And in the Real World, too, you have been studying the way  
That I have been teaching, as my dear disciples.

O, each monk and nun  
I have been reborn here.  
Praise my rebirth,  
Be aware of my rebirth,  
Be aware of my rebirth, it is happening here and now...’  
(Okawa, Kadokawa 1991e: 12; my own translation)

### *Third phase, Missionary Work in Japan (1990 to 1993)*

The next phase Kofuku-no-Kagaku embarked on saw a clear shift from its earlier consolidation phase, when shortly before 1990, it declared that it was to begin a period of evangelism. The first year of this period was called ‘Sunrise 90’. ‘Sunrise’ referred to the objective to make ‘the Sun of Truth’ rise across Japan, and marked the beginning of a concerted campaign to make Kofuku-no-Kagaku’s name and teachings known throughout Japan. The four years of evangelism that followed were extremely significant. In the first year the size of the Movement expanded quickly; the membership figure was just over 10,000 in January 1990 and it rose to 30,000 by the end of May, rising again to 60,000 by the end of June, and reaching 77,000 in July.<sup>21</sup>

After the ‘Sunrise 90’ year, the Movement moved onto the ‘The Miracle Three-Year Project’. Kofuku-no-Kagaku’s rapid growth and frenzied activity led to what became known as the ‘Kofuku-no-Kagaku Phenomenon’ in 1991, and placed the Movement at the centre of public attention. This attention focused on such things as the rapid growth in the membership of the Movement, which allegedly rose from 77,000 in July 1990, to 1,520,000 twelve months later. This expansion is also reflected in my questionnaire survey, which showed a sharp increase in the number of members who

---

<sup>19</sup> Niju-issei ed, 1991: 76-7

<sup>20</sup> The original title is ‘*Buddha Saitan*’ 仏陀再誕, first published in 1989 and then revised in 1994.

<sup>21</sup> ‘*Kofuku-no-Kagaku’s 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Book*’, 1996: 43



joined in this year (p.150-1). In 1995 the Movement claimed a membership of ten million worldwide, which included 3,200 lecturers<sup>22</sup>, and this figure remains the size of the Movement today (2003). I have discussed this rise in membership in detail in Chapter VI, but it is important to note that one of the reasons the membership numbers rose at this time was the introduction of a new category called ‘friendship member’ which allowed people to join the Movement more easily. Other reasons for its success in spreading its name appear to have been the success of two very popular books published in early 1991, which contained a large amount of predictions concerning the near future. These books were entitled ‘*The Great Warning of Allah*’ (January 1991) and ‘*The Terrifying Revelations of Nostradamus*’ (February 1991), and were the top two best-selling books of the first half of 1991 (Astley, 1995: 350). It is clear from these figures that when discussion of the Apocalypse was at its height in the Movement in 1991, it saw its largest rise in membership figures.

As mentioned above, in March 1991, Okawa officially became the leader of a religion rather than a study group, when his four-and-a-half-year-old Movement was given legal recognition as a ‘religious juridical person’ (*shūkyō-hōjin*), by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government. Some critics had observed that the uniqueness of Kofuku-no-Kagaku was the fact that it was not a religious organisation. In 1991 Okawa says in an interview with one of his critics, Sōichirō Tahara, that no legal status truly fitted the nature of Kofuku-no-Kagaku, for instance, educational status was not appropriate, neither was corporation status or even religious status. This was because the Movement covered philosophical, scientific and medical issues, but of all these, religious body status was closest. At first, because of the label or nuance of the word ‘religion’ in modern society, which was not very popular, Kofuku-no-Kagaku did not want to take religious body status, but Okawa decided it would be possible to overcome this shadowy image and turn it into a more positive one (Gekkan Samsāra, 12/1991: 46-7).

This was the year that the Movement started its grand scale festivities, such as Okawa’s ‘Birthday Festival’ (*Goseitan-sai* 御生誕祭), which was first held on 15<sup>th</sup> July 1991 (Okawa’s actual birthday is 7<sup>th</sup> July). On this, Okawa’s 35<sup>th</sup> birthday, he appeared in front of an audience of 50,000 people, including the mass-media, in Tokyo Dome, one of Japan’s major baseball stadia. During his address, Okawa declared that the number of his followers had reached 1.5 million, and also, for the first time, declared his real identity as *El Cantare*, the Grand Spirit of the Terrestrial Spirit Group, who is also known as the ‘Buddha of Mahāyāna’.

---

<sup>22</sup> Inoue et al. ed., 1996: 100



The following day, excerpts of the Birthday Festival were broadcast on a number of Japanese commercial television stations. In these broadcasts, Okawa's appearance was very much like that of any ordinary young businessman, dressed as he was in a dark business suit; this gave many Japanese people an opportunity to see what Okawa actually looked like for the first time. The names of Okawa and his Movement were already widely known in Japan by this time, yet it was only five years since he had left his business life behind him. The Movement now employed a workforce of about 300 people<sup>23</sup> and the number of its branch offices across Japan, referred to as *shibu* 支部, had risen to 300 (Arita, 1991: 30; Astley, 1995: 348); a dramatic rise on the 40 in the previous year, 1990 (Astley, 1995: 348).<sup>24</sup> There were no official branch offices outside Japan at this time, although there were a few meeting places managed by local members, usually in their own homes.

The Miracle Three-Year Project continued the evangelism in the form of a threefold strategy: first, the Movement sought to establish a great religious boom in Japan; second, it wished to eradicate the popular bias against religion; and third, it set itself the ambitious task of becoming the number one religion amongst all the other religions of Japan. In relation to the religious context in Japan, only one third of the Japanese population claim to have religious faith, and the same proportion believe in religion because of family tradition (Ishii, 1997: 6-7). Bias against new religions can be seen when compared with figures about 'religion' per se; 60 per cent of the Japanese population have the idea that recent 'new religions' are primarily concerned with making money, while they have the idea that 'religion' is concerned with 'mind and spirit'; this tendency is strongest amongst the younger generation (ibid., 152-3). The bias can also be seen in the context of religion after the Second World War, when the state religion or governmental support for a particular religion was removed. This is seen to have led to the total denial of religion itself within Japanese society, but Kofuku-no-Kagaku's view is that what this should actually mean is freedom of faith for the individual, and freedom for faiths to develop freely (Shimazono, 2001: 234-5).

During 1991, Kofuku-no-Kagaku employed all kinds of media to increase their profile, including everything from television advertising and programmes where top members appeared, newspaper articles, stickers on the inside of taxis bearing Kofuku-no-Kagaku's name and symbol, and even a zeppelin carrying the Movement's name. Articles on the Movement also appeared in some foreign newspapers, including The

---

<sup>23</sup> Some sources say 600 people were employed across Japan by September 1991, see: Arita: 1991: 76.

<sup>24</sup> The number of branch offices then went down to about 100 in 1992-1993 (Astley, 1995: 348).



Financial Times and The Wall Street Journal.

Shortly after the Birthday Festival, Kofuku-no-Kagaku entered a long ‘conflict’ with *Kōdansha*, one of the largest publishing companies in Japan, in protest over the content of some of its weekly and monthly magazines that heavily criticised and slandered Okawa and Kofuku-no-Kagaku; the titles involved included *The Friday*, *Shūkan-Gendai* and *Gekkan-Gendai*. By the end of 1991 these publications are said to have carried over 40 articles over about three months on Kofuku-no-Kagaku and Okawa (Nijū-isseiki ed., 1991: 15; Kageyama, 1992: 207), and were followed by many other articles of a similar kind. One of the most controversial articles was published in the weekly ‘The Friday’, and issued on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> August 1991. This article<sup>25</sup> carried a wedding photograph of Okawa and claimed that he had a history of neurosis and schizophrenia. The Movement immediately protested to the Publisher about the articles, accusing it of publishing ‘fabrications and slander’ which, they stated, were not based on any reliable evidence; they went on to accuse the Publisher of selling magazines by means of what they called ‘religion bashing’.<sup>26</sup>

A campaign of action followed, and with the help and leadership of the high profile members Tamio Kageyama<sup>27</sup> and actress Tomoko Ogawa, the members of Kofuku-no-Kagaku held several demonstrations and marched across Tokyo to the Publisher’s head office on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1991, an incident which was broadcast by many national television stations. This event was named ‘The Kōdansha-Friday Incident’ (*Kōdansha-Friday Jiken* 講談社フライデー事件), in reference to ‘The Friday’ weekly tabloid at the heart of the controversy. Members soon formed a group of victims, called ‘The Society of Nation-wide Victims of Kōdansha-Friday’ (*Kōdansha-Friday Zenkoku Higaisha-no-kai* 講談社フライデー全国被害者の会), and sued the Publisher for damages suffered as a result of the publishing of ‘fabrications’ and ‘slander’ based on groundless research. The Movement called these court cases

---

<sup>25</sup> ‘A Cross-examination Series: A Sudden Expansion of a Bubble-Religion “Kofuku-no-Kagaku” and the Ambition of Ryuho Okawa, who claims to be God. The Shadowy Side of the Newly Arisen Religion that Attempts to Raise 300-billion yen (c £1.5 billion) to Achieve its Idea of “Utopia”’. The original Japanese title is: 「連続追及・急膨張するバブル教団『幸福の科学』大川隆法の野望・『神』を名乗り『ユートピア』をぶち上げて3千億献金めざす新興宗教の裏側」 ‘The Friday’, 23/30 August, Kōdansha, 1991.

<sup>26</sup> Okawa, 1993b: 251. The mass media has a history of publishing heavy criticism against new religions in Japan. See also: Okawa 1993a: 46.

<sup>27</sup> Kageyama (1947-1998) had been a successful author and was well known for his publications and frequent television appearances in Japan when he became a full-member of Kofuku-no-Kagaku. Before joining, Kageyama claims that he read 45 of Okawa’s books, and when he attended one of Okawa’s public lectures (1991) he became convinced that Okawa was the Master he had been searching for (Kageyamna, 1992: 247-8) and decided to join the Movement with his wife. He later led the members’ protest against Kōdansha. He describes members’ points of view on this incident in his book, ‘How I became a member of the Institute for Research in Human Happiness’, 1992: 184-258.



‘Lawsuits against the Pollution of Spiritual Wellbeing’ (*Seishin-teki Kōgai Soshō* 精神的公害訴訟), and advocated the right of individuals to hold religious faith by claiming compensation (Kofuku-no-Kagaku ed., 1994: 266-273; Kageyama, 1992: 198-256). It is significant that the members of Kofuku-no-Kagaku took the unusual step of turning to the courts to settle the delicate matter of ‘religious faith without interference’; Kageyama, *Okawa* and about three thousand members of the Movement entered a long ‘battle’ against the Publisher. In the period between September and November 1991 they fought the claim that their religious rights had been damaged directly by Kōdansha, bringing a lawsuit against the president of the Company, the editor of the weekly magazine, the journalist who wrote the articles and also a religious studies academic who had contributed to the articles. The Publisher also sued Kofuku-no-Kagaku for disruption of business. The members who took part in the lawsuits demanded one million Japanese yen (about £5,000) per plaintiff, which made the total claim about three billion yen (about £15 million) for the three thousand involved (Kageyama, 1992: 231-2; Kōdansha-Friday Zenkoku Higaisha-no-kai ed., 1995: Ch.2, 194-5). Kofuku-no-Kagaku called the actions of the victims the ‘Revolution of Hope’ (*Kibō no Kakumei* 希望の革命), which clearly illustrated its fight against what it saw as the evil nature of the mass-media. I discuss the Movement’s attitude to the media, as well as the ‘Revolution of Hope’, in detail in Chapter VII, (p.186-7). The Movement itself, too, sued the publisher, the authors of the articles, as well as commentators on the articles. In the result of one case, the High Court ordered Kofuku-no-Kagaku to pay 10 million yen (about £50,000) to the Publisher for its methods of protest against the Publisher, which it said caused disruption of business (Okudaira, 1997: 247; Asahi Shimbun, 21 Dec. 1996). Later the Tokyo High Court and the Supreme Court concluded two of the tribunals by ordering the Publisher to pay a total of three million yen (about £15,000) to the Movement in May and June 2001.<sup>28</sup>

During 1992, Okawa’s teaching became more Buddhist in nature, as he claimed that traditional Buddhist teachings had become distorted over the last 2,500 years, and that he, as the reincarnation of the Buddha, was now correcting them (Tenth Anniversary Commemoration Book, 1996: 52). From 1992 onwards, Kofuku-no-Kagaku began to hold many religious ceremonies and rituals, including services for ancestors. The Movement also made its *gohonzon* 御本尊<sup>29</sup>, a religious icon that is used for worship at home, more widely available to members.

<sup>28</sup> See: ‘Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly’, No.173, 7/2001: 60-1.

<sup>29</sup> See: Footnote 52.



In 1993, Okawa declared that in his view the Movement had reached what he called an ‘advanced level’ as a religion, by this he meant that it had become influential in terms of its size, teachings and quality. This description, as an ‘Advanced Religion’ became the Movement’s motto, which was frequently used at that time. Okawa declared that this meant Kofuku-no-Kagaku was first, a ‘future oriented religion’; second, that its teachings will bring about absolute peace; and third, it will establish the value system of the ‘Real World’ (High Spirit Realm) on Earth (Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly, No.71, 1/1993: 30-37). I have discussed details of the ‘Real World’ in Chapter V.

*Fourth phase, Missionary Work Abroad and Moral Protest at home (1994 to 1996)*

The Movement’s next phase was the ‘Big-Bang Three-Year Project’, which spanned from the beginning of 1994 to the end of 1996. This followed on from the four-year domestic missionary period, ‘Sunrise 90’ and ‘The Miracle Three-Year Project’ and was another full-scale programme of missionary work, this time aimed at the international arena. 1994 also marked the start of an important doctrinal shift.

In terms of its international mission, Kofuku-no-Kagaku opened its first overseas office in New York (Kofuku-no-Kagaku USA) in January 1994, and this was soon followed by the opening of other official branches in Los Angeles, London, and São Paulo. The Movement’s overseas development is discussed in detail in Chapter VI, (p.138-141).

At the beginning of this new Project, Kofuku-no-Kagaku declared a new catchphrase for itself as ‘World-Religion: Kofuku-no-Kagaku’, which embodied the idea that the Movement could one day bring all the religions of the world together with its teachings.<sup>30</sup> At the same time it was making positive proclamations concerning its ambitions to be a world-religion, Kofuku-no-Kagaku was still addressing the doomed state of the world and the significance of Nostradamus’ negative predictions for the close of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>31</sup> In his first lecture of 1994 on 6<sup>th</sup> February, which was entitled ‘The Age of Choice in Religions’ Okawa talked about the importance of the Movement’s eschatological expectation, referring to it as a period when the destiny of a lot of people would be determined (Okawa, 1995c: 186). He also declared that his ideas did not conflict with other religious teachings, such as Buddhism, Christianity, Islam or

---

<sup>30</sup> See: ‘Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly’, No.83, 1/1994: ‘Iza Big-Bang e: Sekai-shūkyō: Kofuku-no-Kagaku’: 42-7.

<sup>31</sup> See: Ibid., 38-9, ‘There are only five years left until 1999, the year that Nostradamus foresaw. The Earth is in a state of crisis’.



Judaism, for example (ibid., 215).

However, the important doctrinal shift that started in 1994 saw Kofuku-no-Kagaku slowly move its emphasis away from predictions of disaster and towards a more positive outlook, discussed in detail in Chapter VII. Three other distinct shifts can be seen in the Movement at this time, first, a new emphasis on its identity as a Buddhist movement and the role of El Cantare; second, a less eclectic approach; and third, the start of strong criticism levelled against other NRMs and various ideologies.

Although, as discussed above, Buddhist ideas had already played a central role in Okawa's teachings, the Movement had also drawn on the teachings of a diverse range of religious and historical figures, including Jesus, Moses, Confucius, Nichiren, Amaterasu Omikami, Nostradamus and Takahashi of GLA. From the Spring of 1994 there was a move away from reference to these figures, including reference to the Apocalypse, and the importance of one figure, El Cantare, was emphasised instead. As mentioned above, (p.73) El Cantare is associated with Buddhism by the Movement, as he is understood to be the essence of the Buddha which represents Enlightenment. The Buddhist emphasis can be seen in other ways too. This was the moment that Okawa's principal book, 'The Laws of the Sun', and the Movement's fundamental *Sūtra*, 'The Dharma of the Right Mind', were both revised to make the contents more consistent with the Movement's new, less eclectic approach. In the new version of The Laws of the Sun, for example, the word 'God' was almost completely replaced with the word 'Buddha' except in reference to Hermes, who is a divine figure in Kofuku-no-Kagaku, and believed to be one of Okawa's previous incarnations. It was also at this point that the Buddhist concept of the 'Devotion to the Three Jewels', namely, the *Buddha*, the *Dharma* and the *Sangha*<sup>32</sup> came to be considered of supreme importance, and was incorporated into a new ritual called 'Pledge of Devotion to the Three Jewels' (*Sanki Seigan-shiki* 三歸誓願式), discussed in Chapter V (p.128).

The old eclectic approach was not simply abandoned in favour of this new emphasis on Buddhism however, it was actively discouraged. It is possible to see the rapid shift in emphasis in the monthly journals of the Movement. In the February issue of 'Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly' (No.84, 2/1994), El Ranty<sup>33</sup>, the High Divine Spirit identified with Shinji Takahashi, Founder of GLA, was declared as one of the guiding

---

<sup>32</sup> The Buddha (El Cantare/Okawa), the Dharma (Okawa's teachings), and the Sangha (the community of disciples, that is, Kofuku-no-Kagaku).

<sup>33</sup> El Ranty was considered to be one of the Ten Highest Divine Spirits of the Ninth Dimensional Realm, or what the Movement calls the 'Cosmic Realm' (*Uchū-kai* 宇宙界), along with El Cantare, Jesus, Confucius, Manu, Maitreya, (Isaac) Newton, Zeus, Zoroaster and Moses. The cosmology of Kofuku-no-Kagaku is discussed in detail in Chapter V.



spirits of the Movement (Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly, No.84, 2/1994: 42-9). According to Kofuku-no-Kagaku, before Takahashi's death in 1976, he is said to have made a prediction that his 'law will be succeeded by a youth from West Japan within five years' (ibid., 43), said to have come true when Okawa started to communicate with Takahashi's 'spirit' in 1981. In the original version of 'The Golden Laws', Okawa states that he is going to teach the Truth on the foundations laid by Takahashi's teachings (Okawa, 1991h: 212).<sup>34</sup> It is clear from these statements that Kofuku-no-Kagaku initially claimed that Takahashi had an influence on its emergence and teachings. However, according to Kofuku-no-Kagaku's theology, El Ranty's spiritual status was not quite as high as it had been understood to be in GLA. In GLA he was the Grand Divine Spirit of the Grand Cosmos (Numata, 1987: 84) whereas in Kofuku-no-Kagaku he was the 'God of Righteousness' and the 'God of Judgement' who guided various prophets, mainly in the Middle East and Arab regions (Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly, No.84, 2/1994: 44).

By May, however, Kofuku-no-Kagaku's attitude towards GLA had become extremely hostile, as it referred to it as an 'evil religion' or *jakyō* 邪教 (Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly, No.87, 5/1994: 26). The Movement explained this change in attitude by declaring: 'The time of "skilful means" is over' or *Hōben no Jidai wa Owatta* 方便の時代は終わった. 'Skilful Means' (*Hōben*, or *Upāya* in Sanskrit) makes reference to a Mahāyāna Buddhist doctrine that teachings can be adapted to suit a particular situation, and are not necessarily the absolute truth. Kofuku-no-Kagaku used it here to mean that it was to stop borrowing ideas from other religions, and it was time for the 'truth' (ibid., 24). Okawa explained that in his early 'spiritual message' publications he had let the spirits speak freely without altering their messages in any way, and his intention had been to prove the existence of the Spirit World and to publish the spirits' personalities and thoughts. However, Okawa admitted that this had caused confusion amongst the members, because the various spirits said different things, and some critics thought all these messages were the core ideas of the Movement. Even lecturers or high ranking members of staff are said not to have fully comprehended this (ibid., 6).

Kofuku-no-Kagaku then went on to cut out many elements in its teachings that it had taken from GLA. For example, the High Divine Spirit El Ranty had previously been understood within both Kofuku-no-Kagaku and GLA as the originator of humanity. According to the original version of The Laws of the Sun, El Ranty had brought the first

---

<sup>34</sup> GLA is said to have denied the authenticity of Okawa's claim that he was communicating with Takahashi's 'spirit' (Arita, 1991: 124-5).



group of humans to Planet Earth from 'Planet Beta of the Magellanic Clouds' 365 million years ago. The book details how about 60 million people were brought by El Ranty to Planet Earth in a fleet of spaceships that landed in, what is now, Egypt (Okawa, 1991g: 45). However, in the newly revised version, (published in June 1994, soon after the doctrinal reformation was declared), the originator of humanity is no longer El Ranty; the book says El Cantare amplified his compassion and wisdom, and into this energy he put highly developed spirits that originally incarnated on Venus. El Cantare then went on to create a few hundred human beings on Earth (Okawa, 1994d: 56-7). Only then was a new 'immigrant' human race brought to the Planet Earth from 'the Planet of the Magellanic Clouds'. In this new version, however, Planet Beta is not named but referred to simply as the Planet of the Magellanic Clouds, and who brought the 'immigrants' is not mentioned. El Ranty is referred to, but only as the leader of the new immigrants (Okawa, 1994d: 58-9; 1996b: 20-1), and they are described as 'audacious and aggressive' (Okawa, 1994d: 58). El Ranty's status as a High Divine Spirit also changed and he was now understood to be in charge of the entire 'shadowy side' of Heaven called 'Minor Heaven' (ibid., 59) and referred to with the new name, *Enlil*<sup>35</sup>, the name of El Ranty when he was incarnated on earth 2800 BC, according to Kofuku-no-Kagaku (Okawa, 1994d: 355; Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly, No.87, 5/1994: 10-1). This shift towards El Ranty and Takahashi represents one of the major changes within Kofuku-no-Kagaku's theology.

In the new version of *The Laws of the Sun* (1994) Okawa clarified the meaning of major and minor religions, and implied that minor religions had contributed to the creation of Hell (Okawa, 1994d: 59-60; 1996b: 21). He then went on to label GLA as a minor religion for the first time, discussed in more detail below.

Despite these shifts, Kofuku-no-Kagaku's first feature film, 'The Terrifying Revelations of Nostradamus'<sup>36</sup> or *Nostradamus Senritsu no Keiji* ノストラダムス戦慄の啓示, was released in September 1994, and was allegedly based on the Truth of the Spirit

---

<sup>35</sup> Enlil is the god of the wind and the rain in Mesopotamian religion and the god of the religious centre of ancient Sumeria, Nippur.

<sup>36</sup> Kofuku-no-Kagaku released three feature films between 1994 and 2000, namely 'The Terrifying Revelations of Nostradamus', 'Hermes – The Winds of Love' (*Hermes – Aiwa Kaze no Gotoku*) and 'The Laws of the Sun' (*Taiyō no Hō*). Its forthcoming film 'The Golden Laws' (*Ogon no Hō*) is due to be released in Autumn 2003. 'The Terrifying Revelations of Nostradamus' was the Movement's first attempt to publicise its worldview and what it sees as the 'Truths' of the Spirit World, by means of a film. The film contains a large number of warnings about the near future for people who live in modern society. The leaflet of the film warns, for example, 'There are only 5 years left until 1999. What is going to happen to the Planet Earth? Can human kind survive?' The latest computer technology was employed to depict the 'Spirit World' on screen. The same leaflet also says that the amount of computer graphics used and the latest technology employed in the film exceeds that of 'Jurassic Park' and 'Terminator II'.



World. This film was shown in cinemas all over Japan and was based on Okawa's 1991 publication of the same title, which had been one of the best-selling books in Japan in 1991.<sup>37</sup> The reason why the Movement promoted Nostradamus' apocalyptic prophecies at this time, despite its earlier shift away from the Apocalypse, certainly appears somewhat inconsistent. However the popularity of Nostradamus, and the fact that there were just five years left until the fateful 1999, would have been an important element in attracting people to watch the film, which contained a great deal of Kofuku-no-Kagaku's doctrine and messages. While 1994 was the year Kofuku-no-Kagaku decided to separate itself from the teachings of what it called 'Minor Heaven', this was also, therefore, perhaps the last time they could use the popularity of Nostradamus in this way. The Movement had also reached a point where it had become well-known through its missionary work and had managed to spread its name across Japan, which must have helped the Movement feel confident enough to promote its ideas through a film. Another possible reason for the success of the film may have been its approach; it was unusual for an NRM to release a feature film and enter the entertainment industry in this way, particularly with the help of a major film distributor.

The Movement continued to issue further criticisms during 1994 and 1995. In Okawa's speech, entitled *Eien no Chōsen* 永遠の挑戦 'The Eternal Challenge', given at the El Cantare Festival in Tokyo Dome Stadium on 18<sup>th</sup> December 1994, for example, he named 'two devils' (*futatsu no akuma* 二つの悪魔) that Kofuku-no-Kagaku was confronting; the devil within the mass media and the devil within evil religions. Okawa mentioned Aum Shinrikyō and the Unification Church, and Soka Gakkai also came in for particular criticism for damaging the reputation of new religions by misleading the nation (Okawa, 1995d: 39, 42-3 and 78-9). Okawa also heavily criticised Kōmeitō, Soka Gakai's political party, for its influence on Japanese politics. The 'evil quality' in the mass media was heavily criticised too, especially the publication of so-called, 'hair nude' (pornography showing pubic hair that is illegal in Japan) and the treatment of those who had committed suicide that, Okawa said, had been portrayed as heroes of a tragedy, and as a result could trigger further suicides (*ibid.*, 21-4). Okawa teaches that 'suicide is evil' (*ibid.*, 23), because, he says, those who commit suicide cannot enter Heaven and also make others extremely unhappy. His other strong criticism was

---

<sup>37</sup> It is important to note that Kofuku-no-Kagaku clearly states that this book, *The Terrifying Revelations of Nostradamus* (1991), completely differs from its own thinking. This is because the book is one of Okawa's 'spiritual message' publications, in which Okawa let 'spirits', in this case Nostradamus' 'spirit', speak freely. The book is therefore understood to detail Nostradamus' personal point of view, not Okawa's. For more details of the film, see the leaflet: *Nostradamus Senritsu no Keiji: Shijō-hatsu no Ijigen-taiken Movie*, IRH Press, 1994.



directed against the idea of 'brain death' and organ transplants, which Kofuku-no-Kagaku understands to be evil (ibid., 30). The Movement believes that the soul remains in the body for about 24 hours and so brain death is not a proper human death; organ transplant during this state will prevent the safe journey of the soul to Heaven (ibid., 30-5).

It was in 1994 that Kofuku-no-Kagaku's activities in the public sphere became more prominent. Again, this was probably due to the Movement's influence, which it appears to have felt was now strong enough to be able to engage in outspoken activities. For example, in November and December 1994, members of the Movement organised several demonstrations against Kōdansha publishing house; this time the Movement's protests were directed against their pornographic publications. Some 31,000 people in Tokyo and 35,000 people in Osaka gathered and marched in the main streets in order to try and prevent this new trend in the media. After the great earthquake in Osaka and Kobe on 17<sup>th</sup> January 1995, Okawa sent 20,000 people from Kofuku-no-Kagaku to the stricken area to assist with the rescue and support work. This included supplying doctors, providing food, and building public baths.

Kofuku-no-Kagaku's public activities continued in 1995 with a demonstration against Aum Shinrikyō. Aum had already been in trouble with the public and the police, and about three weeks after the kidnapping of Mr Kiyoshi Kariya<sup>38</sup> on 28<sup>th</sup> February 1995, Kofuku-no-Kagaku is said to have started to communicate to politicians, the mass media and other public bodies, that Aum was behind the kidnapping. Kofuku-no-Kagaku formed a group called 'The Society for Saving Mr Kiyoshi Kariya from Aum Shinrikyō'.<sup>39</sup> Two public meetings were organised, both held in Tokyo on 18<sup>th</sup> March 1995, and called 'The Emergency Meetings to Pursue the Problem of Aum Shinrikyō'.<sup>40</sup> After the meetings, approximately 10,000 people took part in a demonstration and distributed leaflets in Tokyo's streets, naming Aum as the guilty party behind the kidnapping.<sup>41</sup> Two days after this, on 20<sup>th</sup> March 1995, members of Aum fed the nerve gas 'sarin' into the Tokyo underground system; this incident triggered a police

---

<sup>38</sup> Mr Kiyoshi Kariya (68) was working in a Government Ward Office in Meguro, Tokyo. His sister was a member of Aum and had already made a large donation to the Movement. Before his disappearance on 28<sup>th</sup> February 1995, Mr Kariya 'had opposed his sister's participation in the Movement, especially her plans to donate the family property to the religion' (See: Kisala, 1995: 8; Kofuku-no-Kagaku Kōhō-kyoku ed., 1995a).

<sup>39</sup> Its official Japanese name is '*Aum Shinrikyō Kara Kariya Kiyoshi san o Kyūshutsu-suru Kai*' オウム真理教から假谷清志さんを救出する会.

<sup>40</sup> The official Japanese name for these meetings is '*Aum Shinrikyō-mondai o Tsuikyū-suru Kinkyū Shūkai*' オウム真理教問題を追求する緊急集会.

<sup>41</sup> For more details, see: Kofuku-no-Kagaku Kōhō-kyoku ed., (1995a); 'Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly', No.99, 5/1995: 32-41.



investigation two days later and all the Aum facilities were raided simultaneously, and most of the core members arrested. At the present time, in 2003, the trials are still ongoing. The Aum incident and the terrible earthquake just two months earlier, again sparked discussions on the Apocalypse in Kofuku-no-Kagaku.

Further high profile features of Kofuku-no-Kagaku's activities in 1995 were the many political and economic issues addressed by Okawa. For example, in a speech entitled *Shinsei-Nippon no Shishin* 新生日本の指針 (The Right Way for the Reborn Japan), given at the 'Birthday Festival' at the Tokyo Dome Stadium on 10<sup>th</sup> July 1995, Okawa addressed these issues, because, he explained: 'politicians do not understand it (the current political and economic climate) unless a religious leader talks about it' (Okawa, 1995e: 37). In relation to the Aum incidents, Okawa indicated a particular criterion for good and evil religion, that is, if the criminal rates go down by the expansion of a religion, that religion is good, but if the reverse is true, that religion is 'evil' (ibid., 28). Regarding economic issues, he also referred to the friction in the trade between the Japan and US car industries and also addressed the future of the relationship between China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. He then went on to talk about the issue of Japan offering humanitarian support to North Korea by sending rice; he claimed the rice was not being delivered to the people who needed it most, and that the country was also suspected of developing nuclear weapons (ibid., 63-70). He said that Japan needed to become a 'great nation of spirituality' (*seishin taikoku* 精神大国), because 'from the perspectives of the Euro-American leaders, Japan is like an eighteen-year-old youth who has grown up physically but is not yet able to make any decisions alone' (ibid., 98-9). Okawa's view of the future of international relations was that it should be transformed 'from military competition to economic competition' and from 'economic competition to cultural competition' (ibid., 100).

A new monthly opinion magazine, *The Liberty*, targeted at the public rather than exclusively at members, appeared in local bookshops in 1995. The Liberty details Kofuku-no-Kagaku's stance on many social issues, such as cloning technology, brain death, organ transplants, abortion, homosexuality, the national interest rate and adult magazines, and is also the platform for the Movement's special campaigns. The current one addresses suicide; more than 30,000 people commit suicide every year in Japan (Asahi Shimbun ed., 2001: 62), and the Movement aims to reduce this figure by teaching that it is not a viable solution to problems.

The Movement's missionary activities were still developing on the international stage around this time, and in 1995 new overseas offices opened in Korea (Seoul),



Australia (Melbourne), Canada (Toronto) and America (Hawaii and San Francisco). Kofuku-no-Kagaku also started to publish its monthly journals in English, French, Korean, Chinese, and Portuguese. Kofuku-no-Kagaku's critical stance against 'heretical'<sup>42</sup> religion continued. In the same year, the Movement declared that the end of the Century was the 'Age of Choice in Religions' (*Shūkyō-sentaku no Jidai* 宗教選択の時代), and stressed the importance of distinguishing between 'right' and 'wrong' religions. The Movement put forward ten criteria according to which religions could be categorised. These ten criteria or 'wisdoms' are, one, heavenly religions as opposed to religions from hell; two, religions of world reconstruction as opposed to criminal religions; three, Major Heaven religions as opposed to Minor Heaven religions; four, dualistic religions and monistic religions; five, world religions as opposed to national (ethnic) religions; six, monotheistic religions and polytheistic religions; seven, 'God-man unity' type religions as opposed to 'God-man separation' type religions; eight, religions of enlightenment and religions of salvation by God; nine, revelation based religions and scriptural based religions; and ten, fossilised religions and futuristic religions. These criteria are explained in the following way. Heavenly type religions teach self-responsibility, while hell religions attribute their misfortunes to external factors and other people (most Japanese NRMs are cited by the Movement as examples of this latter type of religion). World reconstruction type religions create a movement that aims to reform society and acts against any damaging trends that prevail in society. Criminal types, on the other hand, undertake criminal acts (examples given are Soka Gakkai, Aum Shinrikyō and the Unification Church). Religions of Major Heaven have faith in the Buddha (God), and teach happiness by studying and practising the Truth. Religions of Minor Heaven do not have faith, but worship psychic power and spiritual phenomena (the example given is GLA). Dualistic religions acknowledge good and evil, and teach self-reflection and repentance (for example, Buddhism and Christianity), monistic religions lack research into the origins of evil (*Seichō-no-Ie*). World religions possess a universal vision and way of thinking (Buddhism and Christianity), while ethnic religions, on the other hand, are ethnocentric and nationalistic (Judaism and Shintō). Polytheistic religions acknowledge many deities (Hinduism and Shintō) while monotheistic religions acknowledge only one God and do not recognise any other deities (Judaism and Islam). 'God-man unity' type religions teach that humans can become gods (buddhas) or enlightened (Buddhism), but 'God-man separation' type

---

<sup>42</sup> By 'heretical' the Movement means those religions that embody incorrect teachings, that can misguide followers and encourage anti-social attitudes.



religions teach that man cannot become a god (Christianity). Religions of enlightenment teach the way to enlightenment and self-help as their central practice (Buddhism), but religions of salvation teach that humans will be saved through divine intervention or grace (Christianity). Revelation religions teach that the revelations of the Buddha and God are bestowed at the present time (Buddhism, Christianity and Islam when their founders were alive), on the other hand scriptural based religions form their doctrines based on scripture (Christianity and Buddhism today). Future oriented religions provide the answers to modern problems and indicate a direction for the future, whereas fossilised religions carry on the classical teaching and cannot provide solutions to modern day problems (scripture based religions). These ten criteria are further categorised into three different areas, the first two criteria assess whether a religion is right or wrong; three, four and five assess the standards and diversity within religion; and six to ten assess the difference in the form of faith and method of salvation.<sup>43</sup>

Apart from GLA and Aum, the Movement's extremely critical stance against NRMs was aimed in particular at the Unification Church, Jehovah's Witnesses, World Mates, the Sai Baba Movement, Agonshū, Reiyūkai, Sūkyō Mahikari, Byakkō Shinkō Kai and Soka Gakkai.<sup>44</sup> These NRMs are regarded by the Movement as either 'evil' or 'heretical' religions that 'cause the mass production of evil spirits'.<sup>45</sup> As the reason for its classifications, Kofuku-no-Kagaku stressed the necessity of underlining the criteria of right and wrong religions for the benefit of people in the future.<sup>46</sup> Tanemura, one of the high ranking lecturers in Kofuku-no-Kagaku explains:

'In order to protect the freedom of religious faith, we should not turn a blind eye to criminal groups acting in the name of religion. The world of religion has to be purified by religion itself. Religion will win people's confidence and be able to accomplish its mission only when the Good Force within the world of religion has begun to demolish the 'evil' religions.' (Tanemura, 1995: 55)

From a contextual point of view there seem to be other reasons for this criticism, as well as the other doctrinal shifts discussed here. I mentioned above in Footnote 6 that Inoue (1992: 29) and Numata (1994: 88-90) have both pointed out that Okawa's thoughts are, by and large, influenced by Takahashi and I shall discuss this influence in detail in Chapter VIII. It appears that Kofuku-no-Kagaku labelled

---

<sup>43</sup> See: 'Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly' No.106, 12/1995: 36-9.

<sup>44</sup> For more details of the Movement's views on other NRMs, see: 'Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly' issued in 1994 and 1995, and Hikaku-Shūkyō Kenkyū Kai ed., 1995.

<sup>45</sup> See: Okawa, 1995b: 226, 250 and 346.

<sup>46</sup> Hikaku-Shūkyō Kenkyū-Kai ed., 1995: 202



GLA as a religion of 'Minor Heaven' in order to separate itself from GLA. The label was not just to silence the Movement's outside critics, however. Before the doctrinal shift and reference to other religious figures was discouraged, members would often mention a favourite divine spirit, particularly Takahashi and Jesus. Many members had also come directly from GLA, which is reflected in my research (p.160). According to Okawa, there was a group of Takahashi followers within Kofuku-no-Kagaku who wanted to make the Movement the successor of GLA, and in 1994 Okawa denied that he was Takahashi's successor (Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly, No.87, 5/1994: 5-9) and that Kofuku-no-Kagaku was a 'Takahashi Faith Movement' (ibid., 22).

One further criticism Kofuku-no-Kagaku appears to have been responding to was the accusation that it was nationalistic; I shall discuss in Chapter VII (p.183-6) how it appears that moving its emphasis away from reference to 'spirits', and Nostradamus in particular, was one way to respond to its critics in this respect. A contextual point of interest is that the Movement was perhaps 'coming of age' around this time, and had the confidence to separate itself from elements which had previously helped it to establish its name and generate a popular following. As discussed in Chapter II, Kisala has pointed out how important the use of Nostradamus was for some NRMs to publicise their ideas, as it seems the Japanese public had an insatiable appetite for such material towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Some researchers have also pointed out that the main attraction of Kofuku-no-Kagaku in its early years was its publication of vast amounts of 'spiritual messages', and these messages had attracted many people to join the Movement (Niju-issei ed., 1991: 75). Okawa stopped publishing spiritual messages in 1991, and according to Niju-issei, this was the true beginning of the Movement (ibid., 75). However, the spiritual messages were still very much in existence and well read until 1994, after which all the messages, with the exception of the Buddha's, went out of print. In this sense, it is perhaps more accurate to say that the year 1994, rather than 1991, was the time when Kofuku-no-Kagaku started to appeal to the world without reference to many spiritual figures.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Kofuku-no-Kagaku regarded the year 1996, the final year of the Movement's Big-Bang Project, as a difficult period for religions in Japan, as people were becoming more cynical about NRMs as a result of the problems caused by some extremely anti-social movements. It was during this period that the Movement stopped holding large events in Tokyo Dome and instead held them in local branch



offices. Although the official reason given for this change was that Tokyo Dome was no longer large enough (10<sup>th</sup> Commemoration Book, 77), and the Movement needed to become more intimate and less public in their activities, it seems clear that it was very difficult for NRMs to publicise their activities at this time, and a less public image was prudent. Okawa, however, remained vocal about the role of religion, and criticised the opinion, held by some critics, that religion was unnecessary because of the problems caused by the anti-social activities of some movements. Okawa stated that this was the age when the right religion was needed to enlighten the people (Okawa, 1995f: 322-3). Kofuku-no-Kagaku's call for the 'right' religion no doubt sought to regain the credibility of religion in the eyes of the general public, although Okawa and Kofuku-no-Kagaku also took this stance in order to criticise what it saw as the evil and misleading power caused by such ideologies as atheism and materialism. It was in this context that, in June 1996, Okawa clarified Kofuku-no-Kagaku's shift away from discussions of the Apocalypse and toward a more positive future, and I discuss this in detail in Chapter VII (p.188).

In 1996 Kofuku-no-Kagaku also declared that it had entered a new era, known as *Daijō no Jidai* 大乘の時代, or the 'Age of Mahāyāna'. From this, there is a clear shift in the nature of Kofuku-no-Kagaku from a self-perfection movement to a more inclusivist, salvation oriented movement. Again, using the principles of Mahāyāna Buddhism, Kofuku-no-Kagaku placed new emphasis on its salvific mission. From around this time, the *gohonzon*, or icon of worship used by the members at home, was designed in a golden frame in a boat shape to represent the Mahāyāna or 'Great Vehicle'. Kofuku-no-Kagaku had always been saying that its mission was to save the entire human race, but the Movement declared it explicitly at this time, partly because the Movement felt the time was right in terms of the size of the membership. Perhaps, too, it felt that enough members had reached a sufficient level of understanding of the Buddha's Truth, which gave it a more confident platform. One very concrete sign of the Movement's new 'outreach' approach was its temple building programme, which I shall discuss below. In the same year, *The Laws of the Sun* was published in English and Portuguese for the first time, by non-Japanese publishers. In 1996, too, the Headquarters was moved to a new nine-storey building<sup>47</sup>, owned by the Movement, in Shinagawa Ward, Tokyo, a move from rented to freehold property.

---

<sup>47</sup> The Shinagawa Headquarters was the first building to be owned outright by Kofuku-no-Kagaku. Until this time its Headquarters and most other local branch offices had been rented, normally in central city areas. The Movement went on to build another building, also in Gotanda, in Shinagawa Ward, and this newer and larger ten-storey building has been its new Headquarters since December 1999.



Kofuku-no-Kagaku began its building project at the end of this phase, which was to see the planned construction of no less than eleven major temples across Japan by 2003. The first temple, *Shōshin-kan* 正心館, literally ‘House of the Right Mind’, was officially opened on 4<sup>th</sup> August 1996<sup>48</sup> in Utsunomiya City in Tochigi Prefecture, about 100 kilometres north east of Tokyo; the location of which is illustrated in Figure 6, (p.92) below.

**Figure 3. Sō-honzan Shōshin-kan (Utsunomiya Head Temple)**



*Kofuku-no-Kagaku's first major temple 'Sō-honzan Shōshin-kan' (Head Temple – The House of the Right Mind) was opened in Utsunomiya City, Tochigi Prefecture, in August 1996. This is Kofuku-no-Kagaku's Head Temple. A prominent 'RO' symbol is displayed on the pediment. The distinctive design with pediment and columns is no doubt inspired by Ancient Greek temple architecture. The same Greek style is often used for the interior design of the temple, and has been used for another Kofuku-no-Kagaku building, too. The concept of Ancient Greece is significantly interwoven with Kofuku-no-Kagaku theology, as President Okawa is believed to have been the Greek mythological figure Hermes in one of his past lives, and his wife, Kyoko, is believed to have been Aphrodite. Immediately inside the main entrance of the temple is a large statue of Lord El Cantare as the Gohonzon (see Footnote 52 below), the main object of worship in Kofuku-no-Kagaku. (Photograph courtesy of Kofuku-no-Kagaku.)*

#### *Fifth Phase, Preparation for the coming age (1997 to 2002)*

Over the three years spanning 1997 to 1999 Kofuku-no-Kagaku launched a new project called ‘The New Hope’. During this period, Okawa implied the coming of a ‘dark age’ in the near future, but at the same time the Movement was optimistic about the new Century, and made preparations for it through its three year project of ‘New Hope’.<sup>49</sup>

Probably the most conspicuous activity in 1997, and part of its new project, was the release of its second feature film, *'Hermes - The Winds of Love'* (*Hermes - Aiwa*

<sup>48</sup> For more details, see: ‘Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly’, No.114, 8/1996: 44-5.

<sup>49</sup> ‘Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly’, No.119, 1/1997: 22-5



*Kazeno Gotoku* ヘルメス 愛は風の如く). The film was shown over a period of four weeks from 12<sup>th</sup> April, and was featured in 114 cinemas across Japan. It was fully animated, using computer graphics, and was based on the life of the Greek hero, Hermes, who is believed to be one of Okawa's past existences.

The 'New Hope Project' encompassed the Movement's extensive temple building programme, which had begun in 1996, and by December 1999, Kofuku-no-Kagaku had built its new Headquarters in central Tokyo and five temples. The temple in Utsunomiya City was followed by the construction of another training centre, called *Mirai-kan* 未来館 'The House of the Future', which opened on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1997 also in Utsunomiya City, and a third temple, *Nikkō Shōja* 日光精舎, again in the same prefecture of Tochigi, was opened in July 1998. The three temples in Tochigi Prefecture are now collectively regarded as '*Sō-Honzan*' 総本山 or Head Temples.

**Figure 4. Nikkō Shōja**



*Nikkō Shōja*, the Movement's 3<sup>rd</sup> retreat centre, was built in the tourist region of Nikkō, Tochigi Prefecture. One of three centres which hold the status of 'Head Temple' - all three centres are located in Tochigi Prefecture. Modern facilities for long-stay visitors are available by reservation. Its lodging facilities are all in very traditional Japanese style.

All the Kofuku-no-Kagaku retreat centres or temples are collectively referred to with the Buddhist word *Shōja* 精舎 (Sanskrit: *vihāra*<sup>50</sup>), although some can also be referred to as *Shōshin-kan* (House of the Right Mind). As can be seen from the photographs, a *Shōshin-kan* or *Shōja* is a building of great size. They are designed to

<sup>50</sup> A term used in Buddhism to refer to a temple, monastery or convent.



provide an environment where visitors can receive religious training by attending courses which offer guidance on the Movement's teachings and practices; these include meditation and self-reflection sessions, lectures, rituals and various special prayer sessions which are unique to each temple. Each temple has been designed to create an environment where visitors, members and non-members alike, are able to receive religious training in relaxing surroundings, which are totally detached from the distractions and stresses of the outside world. The Movement explains that it has created these temples so that visitors 'can enjoy the relaxation which everybody once experienced in the heavenly world before birth' (Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly, No.114, 8/1996: 44-5). Anyone can visit for a day, but many stay for a few days. I had a few opportunities to participate in some of the sessions held in the temples during my fieldwork, and these included meditation and self-reflection sessions, discussed in Chapter V in the section on practice.<sup>51</sup>

All the temples have facilities for guests to stay overnight, similar to those of a traditional Japanese inn, *ryokan*, including large communal baths or individual baths in each room, futons, payphones, vending machines, and the provision of two meals each day. A specific feature of interest in the temples is the large altar dedicated to the Grand Spirit El Cantare, Kofuku-no-Kagaku's main sacred figure of worship, known as the *Gohonzon* 御本尊.<sup>52</sup> Each temple also has a large statue (also called *gohonzon*) of this Grand Divine Spirit as the object of worship for visitors. The style, appearance and significance of each *gohonzon* statue is unique to each temple and the Head Shōshin-kan Temple in Utsunomiya City is alone in having a very large El Cantare statue, which was constructed in 2002. All visitors need to make a prior reservation to stay at the temples and participate in the sessions, unless they are making a day visit just to worship the *gohonzon*; all the domestic work, such as cleaning, cooking, washing-up and bed-making, is done by the participants themselves; visitors are free to do as they wish during their stay as it is not compulsory to attend the various sessions. Attendance fees for various sessions and prayer rituals are based on visitors' voluntary donations,

---

<sup>51</sup> I visited the Head Temple *Utsunomiya Shōshin-kan* as well as two other temples in the same Prefecture, namely *Mirai-kan* and *Nikkō Shōja*, for two days each in May and December 1997, and December 1998 respectively. I had the opportunity to attend sessions, share the experience with other attendees, and look around the facilities. I also visited *Biwako Shōshin-kan* in *Shiga* Prefecture in the *Kansai* (West Japan) region in January 2000, and *Tokyo Shōshin-kan* in Central Tokyo in December 2001.

<sup>52</sup> The English translation of '*Gohonzon*' in this context is the main object of worship, which can be a statue or an image. *Gohonzon* also means the main sacred figure of worship itself, and in Kofuku-no-Kagaku's case the *Gohonzon* is the Lord El Cantare. In this thesis, I distinguish the '*Gohonzon*', (with upper case 'G') the main sacred figure of worship, from a '*gohonzon*', an object to worship at home or in the temples. Many members have a *gohonzon* at home, the style of which has varied over time.



for which the recommended amounts are indicated and can be high, although visitors are free to make whatever donations they wish.

Kofuku-no-Kagaku has built seven more temples across Japan to date (the end of 2003), including one next to Lake Biwa in Shiga Prefecture, opened in December 1998, illustrated below.

**Figure 5. Biwako Shōshin-kan**



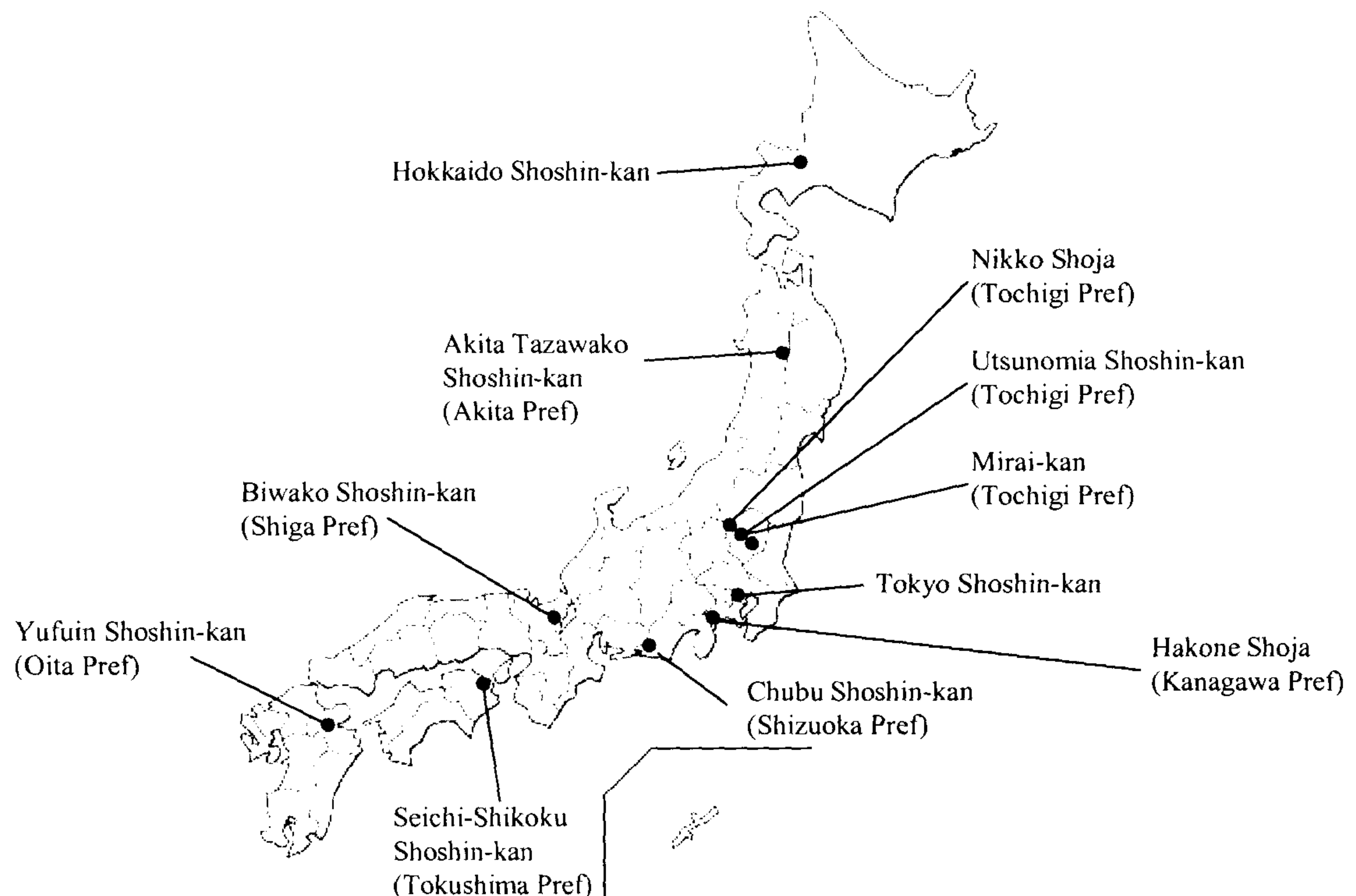
*Biwako Shōshin-kan stands next to Lake Biwa in Shiga Town, Shiga Prefecture, and was opened in December 1998. This is Kofuku-no-Kagaku's only temple/retreat centre in the Kansai Region (West Honshū-Mainland). Like other temples, there are a number of members of staff staying and looking after the facilities 24 hours a day.*

Another temple was built in Yufuin in Oita Prefecture, on Kyūshū Island, which was opened in July 1999 and another in Tokushima Prefecture on Shikoku Island, which was opened in July 2000. Okawa was born and grew up in Tokushima Prefecture, and so, as the Prefecture is regarded as Holy Land this temple is called the 'Holy Land - Shikoku Temple' (*Seichi Shikoku Shōshin-kan* 聖地四国正心館). There is also a major temple in Central Tokyo, in Minato Ward, which was opened on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2001, another near Lake Hamanako in Shizuoka Prefecture, one in the tourist Hakone region in Kanagawa Prefecture, another next to Tazawako Lake, Akita Prefecture, on the North Honshū Island which opened in April 2003 and one in Sapporo City on Hokkaido Island, opened in August 2003. Kofuku-no-Kagaku already has one temple outside Japan, which is located in Jundiai, São Paulo, Brazil and was opened on 1st March 1998. This temple is a little different to its Japanese equivalents as it has no retreat centre status; there are no facilities for long-term visitors nor are there any members of staff staying in



the temple.<sup>53</sup> The Movement is now planning to build a temple in Hawaii, which is due to open in 2006.

**Figure 6. Location map of Kofuku-no-Kagaku's temples/retreat centres**



In March 1999, many of the spiritual messages that had been withdrawn after 1994 were reintroduced, although they are only available to members of Kofuku-no-Kagaku, and not in bookshops. According to the Movement, this is because, while members are aware that what the 'spirits' are reported to be saying in the books is not necessarily a reflection of Kofuku-no-Kagaku's ideas, outsiders may not be and the Movement wishes to avoid any future misunderstanding between the content of the messages and its own doctrine. As mentioned above (p.67), the Movement had said that the publication of the spiritual messages was to prove the existence of the Spirit World and the continuity of personalities even after physical death. The new editions are not completely identical to the originals as they are no longer paperbacks but are bound in gold coloured hardback. Members who want the new editions, entitled *Okawa Ryuho Reigen Zenshū* 大川隆法霊言全集 or '*The Complete Works of the Spiritual Messages of Ryuho Okawa*' can acquire them by making a generous donation, rather than actually 'buying' them. In relation to donations, Numata has pointed out that the amount of financial contributions or donations required from the members to support the Movement's activities is getting higher compared to its early years as a study group.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with Mr Oikawa, Head of the International Division, Tokyo, 19<sup>th</sup> December 2001.



Numata also points out that this might be preventing the further rapid expansion of the membership (Numata, 1995: 234).

After the New Hope Project, Kofuku-no-Kagaku's next project started at the beginning of 2000. Unlike previous projects, however, it did not have any particular name, and some people, including the Manager of the European Branch in London (1999-2001)<sup>54</sup>, simply referred to it as the 'The Next' Three Year Project. I asked a number of the Movement's staff what exactly this period was about, but it seemed that it was not really accompanied by any particular aims, as I received no clear answers.

The two most prominent activities that Kofuku-no-Kagaku undertook in 2000 were, first; the release of its third feature film '*The Laws of the Sun*', that was shown all over Japan from 28th October 2000 and became the most popular film produced by Kofuku-no-Kagaku<sup>55</sup>, and second; the opening of its sixth temple, in Tokushima Prefecture on Shikoku Island. In the same year, charitable status was granted to IRHH Europe, based at the Movement's Head Office in London, by the Charity Commission in June 2000 (Charity No. 1081158). Europe became the third overseas branch office to obtain legal status as a religious organisation, after 'Kofuku-no-Kagaku USA' (New York) and 'Ciencia da Felicidade' (São Paulo, Brazil).

---

<sup>54</sup> Interview with Mr Taku Igata, London, 27<sup>th</sup> September 2000.

<sup>55</sup> Interview with Mr Teddy Takagi, European Branch Manager (2001- ), London, 4<sup>th</sup> July 2002.



Figure 7. Promotion for the film *'The Laws of the Sun – The Way to El Cantare'*



Figure 7 left, is a typical image used by Kofuku-no-Kagaku to promote its third feature film: *'The Laws of the Sun – The Way to El Cantare'* (*Taiyō no Hō - El Cantare eno Michi* 太陽の法 - エルカンターレへの道), released in October 2000. The central figure is the Buddha, and the two other prominent figures are kings who lived at different times in history; all three are believed to be past incarnations of the same spirit (that is, past lives of President Okawa). Above the title of the film, the main

message on the leaflet says: *'It is no coincidence that you were born at this time and are living here now'*. The message is offering meaning to the viewers in relation to why they are here now, which is a philosophical question that people tend to ask. According to my research, many members said their search for these answers was one of the principal reasons or motives for joining Kofuku-no-Kagaku (p.170-1). All three Kofuku-no-Kagaku films contain this element; offering a view as to the purpose of life.

Soon after the film's successful release in Japan it was shown in the USA and the UK. In the UK, Kofuku-no-Kagaku's European Branch (IRHH Europe) organised two showings of the film in central London on one day only, at a modern cinema called the ICA Cinema - chosen for its convenient location on the Mall and close to St James' Park - on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2001; I attended both showings. The ICA is a large institution designed to hold various art exhibitions, and IRHH Europe rented out the cinema for a day. The first showing was about 60-70 per cent full, and the second was nearly full. About 50 per cent of the audience was non-Japanese and many were Kofuku-no-Kagaku members and their friends. Many members came from the rest of Europe to see the film, including Austria, France, Germany and Norway, and some of those who had



travelled were not affiliated to the Movement. A number of members were working as volunteers: two sisters of Indian origin were sitting in the temporary box office, wearing white T-shirts bearing the title of the film in red, and selling tickets. Other volunteers were guiding people to their seats in the cinema. Most of the members had never seen the film before, and some of them paid to see it twice.

The film lasts for approximately 100 minutes, and is animated using the latest computer graphics. It contains many of the Movement's spiritual messages; for example, the story implies the Movement's concept of gender roles, depicting women as manifestations of 'elegance and grace' (*yūbi-sa to yūga-sa* 優美さと優雅さ), and men as manifestations of 'wisdom and courage' (*chie to yūki* 知恵と勇氣). Significantly, the film includes the Movement's millenarian messages, including the concept of the creation of a utopian society. Part of this process, it explains, began in great civilisations of the past such as Mu and Atlantis, which were swallowed up by tidal waves and submerged under the ocean, and these upheavals are understood as the 'self cleansing process of the Earth' (*chikyū no jijō-sayō* 地球の自浄作用). The film implies that the world is facing a very similar situation today and might suffer the same fate. The film carries the message that those watching the film all went through what they are seeing on the screen as a result of the process of reincarnation; for example, they would have been alive during the Mu civilisation in a previous incarnation. The main message of the film is to make people realise what is happening in modern society today; in this sense the Movement is trying to give the audience the purpose of life. At the end of the film, Japan, and Tokyo in particular, is portrayed as the centre of a salvation movement, under the guidance of the reincarnated Buddha, and ends with a theme song, sung by high profile pop singers who are affiliated to the Movement.

Planning for Kofuku-no-Kagaku's new feature film, called 'The Golden Laws: History through the Eyes of the Eternal Buddha - AD 2403 Time-Rafting', is currently underway, and the film is planned for release in October 2003.

Kofuku-no-Kagaku's latest project is called 'The Steady Three Year Project', which began in 2003. This period is marked by domestic consolidation, in which the Movement plans to strengthen its foundations in preparation for further international development, planned to begin in 2006. Part of this international plan includes the building of a temple/retreat centre in Hawaii, mentioned above.

Before I conclude this chapter, I will give a brief overview of the organisation of the Movement. I shall first consider the importance of the role of President Okawa, and then the structure of the organisation.



#### 4.4 Overview of the Organisation of the Movement

**Figure 8. President Ryuho Okawa**



(Photograph courtesy of Kofuku-no-Kagaku)

Okawa is the Founder of Kofuku-no-Kagaku, author of most of the literature it produces, and in line with Weber's ideas concerning charismatic authority (Weber, 1991: 245), his leadership is characterised by belief in his supernatural powers, as he claims to be the reincarnation of Buddha, and the incarnation of the Highest Divine Spirit, El Cantare. His leadership and authority can perhaps most

clearly be seen in the speed with which the Movement has developed, and the changes that have accompanied this speed. These changes apply to the projects and doctrinal shifts, as well as to the movement of staff, who do not usually stay in any one post for long. Wallis (1983) has pointed out that the policy of rapid change is one way for a charismatic leader to maintain his authority, and that this protection is necessary because a leader is always vulnerable, either to disbelief in his supernatural claims, routinisation or rival leaders (Wallis, 1983: 8). Wallis lists the following forms that this change may take: first, frequent change of environment; second, undermining of ties between pairs and groups; third, undermining of relationships of authority; and fourth, introduction of new beliefs and practices (ibid., 8). In this way, no one, apart from the charismatic leader, has a chance to establish him or herself and create a potential clash of authority and even schism.

Since its inception, Kofuku-no-Kagaku has been organised internally into company-like divisions. The titles of the positions within the Movement reflect this, too. Okawa was originally called *Shusai* 主宰, Co-ordinator or Chairman, and the members used to refer to him as *Shusai Sensei* or 'Master Co-ordinator'. In January 1997, when the 'New Hope Project' began, Okawa changed his title to *Sōsai* 総裁 or President, and since then has been called *Sōsai Sensei* or Master President. Under Okawa, there is the Board of Directors, concerned with the management of the Movement, and the Heads of Divisions; for example, Mr Yuki Oikawa, Head of the International Division, is also a Director or *Riji* 理事. There are many branch offices or *shibu* 支部 both in and outside Japan, and each office is run by a *shibu-chō* 支部長 or branch manager, also a secular term. Each county in Japan has at least one branch office. I asked one of the high ranking members of staff during my several visits to the Movement's Headquarters,



how many branch offices existed in Japan and how many people were working as full-time members of staff. Unfortunately, however, the answer was not forthcoming<sup>56</sup>, and for this reason I have had to rely on earlier figures. Some research indicates that there were 40 branch offices in the summer of 1990, and this number grew to 300 in 1991 and then down to around 100 in 1992-1993 (Arita, 1991: 30; Astley, 1995: 348). The number of people who were employed by the Movement was about 300 in 1991 (Astley, 1995: 348). However, these figures are from over ten years ago, when the Movement was still very new, also, as Numata points out, and as discussed above, there are frequent staff transfers (Numata, 1995: 229) and so reliable figures are difficult to obtain.

During my fieldwork, when I visited the offices of the Movement's Headquarters in Central Tokyo, it was hard to tell the difference between Kofuku-no-Kagaku's offices and those of a business corporation. Most employees of the Movement were wearing business suits and working on documents at their desks, with the constant sound of telephones and facsimiles in the background. There were filing cabinets and large photocopiers and, of course, the latest computers – apart from the presence of the *gohonzon* (the religious icon of worship) within the office of each division, it felt as though I was visiting a major trading house. Even though staff are called *shukke-sha*, renouncers who have left their secular lives, they are engaged in office work for many hours a day.

In relation to the members, Kofuku-no-Kagaku's activities are structured according to its division system called the 'five divisions for activities' *katsudō go-bu* 活動五部, which is determined mainly by age, sex and occupation. These divisions are, namely, the Senior Division *Sōnen-bu* 壮年部, the Middle Division *Chūken-bu* 中堅部, the Youth Division *Seinen-bu* 青年部, the Students' Division *Gakusei-bu* 学生部 and the Women's Division *Fujin-bu* 婦人部 respectively.<sup>57</sup> This system is not absolutely rigid however, as some members belong to more than one division.

It is not unusual for Japanese NRMs to split men and women into different divisions and there is a specific women's group in Kofuku-no-Kagaku, again split into different branches and sub-divisions. The roles of female members are defined to a large extent by what division of the women's group they belong to. Female members

---

<sup>56</sup> The reason given was: 'such sensitive information might be used for the wrong reasons in the wrong hands, such as the mass media. It might well cause considerable damage to either the Movement or the members, for which no one would be able to compensate.' (Quoted from a letter from Kofuku-no-Kagaku International Division, dated 18<sup>th</sup> August 2000.)

<sup>57</sup> The English translations for these divisions are taken from Astley (1995).



are automatically members of the women's group, called 'The Aphrodite Society' (*Aphrodite Kai* アフロディーテ会), which consists of two branches, the 'Women's Division' (*Fujin-bu* 婦人部) and 'The Society of Florence' (*Florence no Kai* フローレンスの会). The Women's Division consists of members who have time to participate in Kofuku-no-Kagaku activities during the day; they are usually housewives, mothers and others not engaged in full-time work. The Society of Florence is made up of 'career women' who usually meet in the evenings or at weekends. A sub-division of the Women's Division is called 'The Society of Maria' (*Maria no kai* マリアの会), which is a group of mothers with small children. These groups are created in order to accommodate the different amounts of time that the members are able to give to the Movement.<sup>58</sup>

The names of the divisions are worthy of note: 'Aphrodite' refers to the goddess of Greek mythology, because it is believed that this goddess was Okawa's wife, Kyoko (1965- ), in a previous incarnation. 'Florence' refers to Florence Nightingale (1820-1910), who is believed to have been the latest of Kyoko's previous incarnations. 'Maria' refers to the Virgin Mary.<sup>59</sup> All three are considered to represent ideal female types but it should also be noted that these are not Japanese names, and I would speculate that they are chosen for two reasons. First, from the perspective of the Movement's appeal within Japan, use of international words is a common practice, and is employed by those who wish to generate a slightly futuristic, western and sophisticated image. Second, with the use of international names and figures the Movement may feel that it can generate some global appeal.

#### 4.5 Conclusion

It is possible to see from the history and development of Kofuku-no-Kagaku that it has usually followed very specific projects that are clearly named, use English and have clear aims. 'Sunrise 90' and the 'Miracle Three Year Project', for example, aimed to spread the name of Kofuku-no-Kagaku across Japan, and saw a rapid expansion in the Movement in the early 1990s when its membership allegedly rose from 70,000 in July 1990, to over half-a-million by the end of 1991. It is also possible to see that the Movement was fully aware of the challenges it faced in the context of a somewhat 'anti-new religion' society, and from 1994 especially, it fought hard through its criticism of other NRMs to separate itself from other movements. It was also in 1994 that the

---

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Mr Teddy Takagi, London, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2002.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.



Movement underwent a clear shift to move away from its association with Okawa's original 'spiritual messages', including Nostradamus' predictions of calamity for the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, towards a more positive outlook, and a more Buddhist identity. Within the Movement this was explained in terms of Okawa's unhappiness that Kofuku-no-Kagaku was being criticised for the content of his spiritual message publications; Okawa explained that these messages were the ideas of 'spirits' such as Nostradamus and Takahashi, and not his own views (Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly, No.87, 5/1994: 22-4; No.88, 6/1994: 62,77-8). However, this again appears, in part, to be a response to the Japanese context, as the Movement was accused of being nationalistic and eclectic. In emphasising Buddhism and the role of Okawa as El Cantare, as well as encouraging members to think more positively about the future, it could be said that the Movement found its own unique identity at this stage in its history.

The modern Japanese context was made all the more challenging by the actions of Aum Shinrikyō in 1995, and created a difficult period for all NRMs. In the case of Kofuku-no-Kagaku, this meant that their activities had to be more low-key and this can clearly be seen from the fact that they stopped holding large events, such as festivities in Tokyo Dome. Despite this difficult period, however, the Movement went on to realise its new aims in its extensive building programme, for example, and also in the opening of overseas branch offices.

Although the period between 2000 to 2002, which some called 'The Next' did not seem to be clearly defined, Kofuku-no-Kagaku's latest project, 'The Steady Three Year Project' that began in 2003, displays a clearer policy, and is a period of consolidation before a new emphasis on international development due to begin in 2006.

I shall now look in depth at the main beliefs and practices of Kofuku-no-Kagaku.



## V. Main Beliefs and Practices of Kofuku-no-Kagaku

### 5.1 Contents of Chapter

In the last chapter I discussed some of Kofuku-no-Kagaku's beliefs, where they were bound up simultaneously with its history and development. In this chapter I shall now consider the Movement's main beliefs and practices in more detail. As in the previous chapter, I rely heavily on primary sources, most of which are in Japanese. They come from Okawa's own writings, a number of other publications by the Movement, and interviews I have conducted with staff and ordinary members. The limited secondary academic sources I am using here are namely, Somers (1994), Numata (1995), Astley (1995), Yamashita (1997) and Shimazono (2001). The aim of this chapter is to bring academic work on the beliefs and practices of Kofuku-no-Kagaku up-to-date, and to provide a detailed account of what is unique in this NRM. I shall show in what sense Kofuku-no-Kagaku is new in terms of its beliefs and practices, as well as in what ways it retains the traditional beliefs and practices of Buddhism, for example.

One of the fundamental teachings of the Movement is called the 'Quest for the Right Mind' (*Tadashiki kokoro no tankyū* 正しき心の探究), and in order to cultivate this 'Right Mind' members follow the core practice of the Movement called 'The Fourfold Path' (*yon-shōdō* 四正道), which consists of 'Love', 'Knowledge', 'Self-reflection', and 'Development'. These four categories are also collectively called 'The Principles of Happiness', the proper practice of which can bring 'real' happiness to anybody in any situation, according to the doctrine. However, this 'real' happiness cannot be realised without 'faith', and it is taught in Kofuku-no-Kagaku that faith is the most important thing for humankind, because all humans are considered to be children of the Buddha/God (Kofuku-no-Kagaku ed., 1994: 12). The Movement's opposition to materialism, atheism, belief in 'wrong' religions and *genze-riyaku* 現世利益 or this-worldly benefit<sup>1</sup> is regarded as proof by the Movement that it distinguishes 'right' faith from 'wrong' faith. According to the Movement, the foundation of 'right' faith is knowing that all humans have eternal life and that they come and go between two realms, namely 'this world' and the 'other world'; in other words, they are reincarnated.

In order to explain these beliefs and practices in detail, I shall begin by looking

---

<sup>1</sup> Kofuku-no-Kagaku does not reject the idea of *genze-riyaku* as such, as the Movement teaches the importance of happiness in this world. It also has prayers to achieve success in this world, which relate to such things as economic prosperity, traffic safety and academic achievement at school. However, when it is solely for utilitarian, selfish purposes, the Movement regards this as evil, as it does not represent 'real' happiness but egotism.



at the Movement's beliefs, starting with its cosmology, and go on to discuss doctrines such as happiness, the significance of hell and Okawa as Buddha and El Cantare. I shall then go on to look at the publications of the Movement, and finally its practices.

## 5.2 Beliefs

### *Cosmology*

Shimazono points out that NRMs in Japan can be divided into two main groups, in terms of cosmology; those which refer to it a lot, and those that do not (Shimazono, 2001: 59). Kofuku-no-Kagaku is a new religion that refers to cosmology a great deal, and key to understanding why it does this is the fundamental idea of the evolution of the soul. This evolution operates through the process of reincarnation, whereby everyone is understood to spend a period of time on earth, after death to return to one of several dimensions of the 'other world', and then to be reborn again on earth. This cycle of existence between the two worlds is designed to propagate the spiritual development of each individual soul and, by revealing the complex cosmology of the universe, Okawa is describing the workings of this evolutionary process. Intimately linked to this revelation are the Movement's ideas about the Utopia, as it is believed within the Movement that recreating the perfection of the higher spiritual dimensions of the 'other world' on earth, is the way to make the evolutionary process more effective, and so the creation of the Utopia is intimately linked with the salvation of souls. In this regard, Okawa, in the postscript of his book 'Creating Utopia on Earth' or *Utopia Sōzō-ron* ユー トピア創造論 (1997), states that his teaching has to be complex because it is necessary to grasp the secrets of the Great Cosmos and the mysteries of the Spirit World in order to understand the real meaning of the creation of the Utopia, and that what seems to be mysterious today will become common knowledge in the future (Okawa, 1997a: 148-9). Studying the cosmology of Kofuku-no-Kagaku, therefore, is important in order to grasp the Movement's view of the world and belief system as a whole, especially the motivation for their final goal - the creation of the 'Buddha-land Utopia', that is, Kofuku-no-Kagaku's Millennium.

The main source of Kofuku-no-Kagaku's ideas concerning cosmology are its three principal books<sup>2</sup>, '*Taiyō no Hō*' (The Laws of the Sun) (1994), '*Ogon no Hō*' (The Golden Laws) (1995) and '*Eien no Hō*' (The Laws of Eternity) (1997), all written by the

---

<sup>2</sup> As mentioned in Chapter IV, Footnote 2 concerning '*The Laws of the Sun*', the original versions of these titles were replaced with newly revised versions after 1994. I am using the later Japanese versions here, but where necessary I shall refer to the older versions. I shall also give the reference of the English versions of the books, after the Japanese reference.



founder, Ryuho Okawa. These three books are collectively referred to as ‘The Trilogy of Salvation’ (*Kyūsei no Sambu-saku* 救世の三部作). ‘The Laws of the Sun’ is perhaps the most important book, and according to the Movement, presents ‘the complete picture of the Truth’. ‘The Golden Laws’ concerns ‘time and history in relation to the Truth’, and ‘The Laws of Eternity’ is dedicated to the structure of the ‘multi-dimensional universe’. The books present information on the cosmology of the Movement from two different perspectives, the historical and the spiritual. The historical perspective considers how the world and humans came to exist, while the spiritual considers the Spirit World and the multi-dimensional structure of the universe. Both perspectives are detailed in order to make the reader understand the evolutionary process that they are a part of:

‘We humans are blessed with an eternal objective which we can progress towards through infinite evolution, and in this evolution we can find development and harmony. This is the world that surrounds humankind, the signpost for us to follow and the objective for which we all must aim.’  
(Okawa, 1997b: 288-9 and English translation from Okawa, 1998b: 115-6)

Okawa also says in ‘The Laws of the Sun’ that an explanation of what happens to a person after death is believed to be one of the traditional roles of religion, while an explanation of the mystery of the origins of life and how life first came into existence is one of the traditional roles of the natural sciences (Okawa, 1994d: 45; 1996b: 13). Okawa argues, however, that ‘in some respects the aims of both religion and science are one and the same’ (Okawa, 1994d: 45; 1996b: 14), because what he reveals in his cosmology encompasses both these topics. Okawa also states in ‘The Laws of Eternity’:

‘Where did I come from and where will I go when I die? This is a question of vital importance that everybody asks at some time in their lives but it is one to which very few people have been able to offer a clear answer. The reason for this is that in order to provide an answer it is necessary to elucidate upon the relationship between this world and the other world and, as things stand at present, there is neither enough accumulated knowledge on the subject nor an established methodology capable of producing an explanation.’  
(Okawa, 1997b: 14; 1998b: 1)

According to Kofuku-no-Kagaku’s distinctive spiritual perspective, the multi-dimensional universe is made up of over twenty dimensions. The first three dimensions make up the world on earth, and are three dimensional in the literal sense of having length, breadth and height (Okawa 1994d: 34-6; 1996b: 9). The world after death, the ‘Real’ or ‘other world’, is understood to begin at the fourth dimension. At the far end of



this ‘other world’ scale, in the twentieth dimension (although it is stated that the dimensions may go higher), is the existence of the Creator God, what Kofuku-no-Kagaku used to call the ‘Eternal Buddha’ (*‘Eien no Buddha’* 永遠の仏陀) but now calls the ‘Primordial Buddha’ (*Konpon Butsu* 根本仏) (Okawa, 1994d: 44; 1996b: 13). The ‘Primordial Buddha’<sup>3</sup> is said to have existed for several hundred billion years (Okawa, 1994d: 45-6; 1996b: 14).

If the world on earth makes up the first three dimensions of the world, what is beyond the phenomenal world; in other words, where do people go when they die? Okawa’s answer to this question concentrates mainly on the fourth to the ninth dimensions. Beyond these, human consciousness no longer exists in a way people can comprehend it, and it becomes impossible to understand these higher dimensions from our perspective in the three dimensional world. The fourth to the ninth dimensions, however, are described in great detail.<sup>4</sup>

The fourth dimension, *Yū-kai* 幽界 or the ‘Posthumous Realm’<sup>5</sup>, is where souls who have yet to attain the values of the Spirit World go after their death in the three dimensional world. This world consists of two realms: *Seirei-kai* 精霊界 or the ‘Astral Realm’, and the dark realm of ‘Hell’. Souls (or spirits) that live in the Astral Realm have lived harmoniously on earth, but have recently left the phenomenal world and have probably forgotten the reality of the Spirit World; they, therefore, stay in the Astral Realm to re-orientate themselves. Souls that live in Hell, on the other hand, have lived against the mind of the Buddha (or God) and go to one of several different types of Hell, according to their own choices, and stay there until they have realised that they were living with the wrong mind, and have finished reflecting on their problems. This dimension, according to Kofuku-no-Kagaku, is concerned with the element of time, but the concept of time in this dimension is very different from that experienced on earth. For example, people who have died and inhabit this dimension, referred to as ‘souls’, can meet souls who have lived in different times, as well as see events that are going to occur in the future of the phenomenal world (Okawa, 1994d: 36-7; 1996b: 9-10).

The fifth dimension is called *Zen’nin-kai* 善人界, or the ‘Realm of the Good’, and is inhabited by souls who are aware of the truths of spirituality, and know what is good and what is evil according to the Truth. It embodies the element of spirituality,

---

<sup>3</sup> Kofuku-no-Kagaku now translates *Konpon Butsu* as the ‘Primordial Buddha’ because the ‘Eternal Buddha’ is another title for Lord El Cantare, whereas the ‘Primordial Buddha’ refers to the Original Buddha, namely the Creator.

<sup>4</sup> For more details on the structure of the dimensions see: ‘The Laws of Eternity’ (1998), which is dedicated to this structure.

<sup>5</sup> The English names used here are from ‘The Laws of Eternity’ (1998).



which means that those who have reached this realm have gone beyond simply understanding that there is life after death (Okawa, 1994d: 38; 1996b: 10).

The sixth dimension is called *Kōmyō-kai* 光明界, or the ‘Realm of Light’, and is inhabited by those souls who have developed the qualities of a leader and who can guide others and help them improve spiritually. In order to inhabit this level, one needs to have a solid grasp of the ‘Knowledge’ of the Buddha’s Truth; I shall explain this knowledge below (p.114). No one who does not believe in the Truth can reside in this dimension (Okawa, 1994d: 38-9; 1996b: 10).

The seventh dimension is called the *Bosatsu-kai* 菩薩界 or the ‘Realm of the *Bodhisattva*’; souls who dwell here have cultivated love and compassion and intend to save others from suffering. The seventh dimension and above are what Kofuku-no-Kagaku regards as the ‘High Dimensional Realms’, and it is these that the members of the Movement aim to enter after completing their lives on earth. In this realm, the inhabitants’ ‘hearts are filled with love, and everything they do is for the benefit of others’ (Okawa, 1994d: 40; 1996b: 11). Altruism is the main element of this realm and, according to the Movement, Christian angels belong to the seventh realm.

The eighth dimension is called the *Nyorai-kai* 如来界 or the ‘Realm of the *Tathāgata*’. According to Kofuku-no-Kagaku, Buddhist *tathāgatas* and Christian archangels have attained this level (Okawa, 1997b: 206; 1998b: 80). Souls in this realm know where the Buddha’s true mind is. They descend on earth only once every two to three thousand years, and are believed to appear on behalf of the Buddha. Compassion is the element that demarcates this realm, described as ‘a very real empathy that includes the desire to give’ like the ‘power of the sun’ which is inexhaustible (Okawa, 1994d: 41; 1996b: 11-2). The Movement explains that figures such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Nāgārjuna<sup>6</sup>, Lao-tzu, John the Baptist, Jeremiah and Elijah of the Old Testament, Martin Luther, Dante, Masaharu Taniguchi (of Seichō-no-Ie), and Mikhail Gorbachev belong to this realm (Okawa, 1997b: 208-10; 1998b: 81; Nijū-isseiki, 1991: 112-3).

The ninth dimension, *Uchū-kai* 宇宙界 or the ‘Cosmic Realm’, is the ‘Realm of the Saviours’ and, as mentioned above, is the highest level of the multi-dimensional realms where human consciousness can exist. There are said to be only ten grand spirits in this realm, including those spirits that once lived on earth as Jesus, Confucius, Moses, Manu, Zeus, Zoroaster, Archimedes, Isaac Newton, and the Buddha or ‘El Cantare’. These spirits descend on earth only once every few thousand years and have the power

---

<sup>6</sup> A Buddhist monk, 2<sup>nd</sup> Century AD, credited with founding the *Mādhyamika* school.



to save humanity. The Highest Grand Spirit in this realm is El Cantare, who is believed to have descended on earth at the present time as Ryuho Okawa. This dimension embodies the element of the universe itself (Okawa, 1994d: 42; 1996b: 12).

Beyond this dimension, only three ‘consciousnesses’ are believed to exist but they no longer possess personal attributes. These three are the ‘Grand Sun Consciousness’ or *Dainichi Ishiki* 大日意識, the ‘Moon Consciousness’ or *Tsuki Ishiki* 月意識, and the ‘Earth Consciousness’ or *Chikyū Ishiki* 地球意識.<sup>7</sup>

Kofuku-no-Kagaku often uses the expression the ‘other world’ or *ano-yo* あの世 to distinguish the fourth dimensions and above from the three-dimensional phenomenal world on earth, referred to as ‘this world’ or *kono-yo* この世. The ‘other world’ is also referred to as the ‘Real World’ or *Jitsuzai-kai* 実在界. According to Kofuku-no-Kagaku, the Buddha or God wants humans to develop and get closer to him, and this process is understood to take a very long time; the multi-dimensional structure explains this evolution, as, according to one’s level of understanding (also explained in terms of the quality of love one can give others) one ascends through the dimensions towards the Buddha. Whatever the state of a soul’s awakening, the phenomenal world on earth is the best place for them to evolve. It is believed that existing in the harmonious surroundings of Heaven for too long is not conducive to this evolution; souls from the various realms, therefore, descend on earth, and experience a world governed by physical, material laws. Living in such a circumscribed environment, for souls that were previously free, is extremely difficult but effective for learning and development.

Ordinary human souls are understood to be reincarnated on average about once every three hundred years. However, the higher one’s spiritual awakening or enlightenment gets, the more protracted the cycle of reincarnation becomes. Souls at the *bodhisattva* level, for example, are said to be reincarnated every eight hundred to a thousand years while the cycle of reincarnation for souls at the *tathāgata* level is even longer, at about once every two to three thousand years (Kofuku-no-Kagaku ed., 1994: 158-9).

Every time a soul is reincarnated, it automatically forgets both its experiences in the other world, and its past lives in this world; this enables each soul to begin a new life on earth on an equal footing. However, their spiritual awakening before they are born is likely to have an effect on their later life, but whether a soul belongs to the ‘Realm of the Good’, the fifth dimension, or ‘The Bodhisattva Realm’, the Seventh Dimension, once born, all souls start from the same point. During their life on earth, an

---

<sup>7</sup> For more details, see: Okawa, 1994d: 43-4; 1996b: 12-3.



individual is tested to see if they are able to attain some form of spiritual awakening while in the phenomenal world. Incidentally, no soul can be reincarnated directly from Hell, according to the Movement (ibid., 158-9), otherwise souls that are considered to be ‘ill’ and suffering in Hell could escape from it of their own volition. I shall explain how they leave Hell below (p.116).

A unique angle on the idea of reincarnation in Kofuku-no-Kagaku is that souls can choose the life challenges they need and the environment in which they will live on earth before birth, including their parents. In this way, souls are said to choose the most appropriate and effective environment in which to pursue their soul-training<sup>8</sup> or in other words, they select the best context in which to correct their karma (for example, they experience a particular race or gender, and challenges such as disease and family problems are often explained in terms of this worldview). In this sense, reincarnation, according to the teachings of Kofuku-no-Kagaku, is not an automatic process according to a rigid karmic law of cause and effect, because an individual has a certain amount of choice and control over what they experience on earth. This is one of the main reasons that the notion of reincarnation and karma is, therefore, not a negative concept in Kofuku-no-Kagaku, unlike its portrayal in many traditional Buddhist and Hindu schools. In addition to this, the process of reincarnation that Kofuku-no-Kagaku teaches, like Mahāyāna Buddhism, does not necessarily end even when a soul has finally reached a state of enlightenment, because high divine spirits, such as *bodhisattvas* and *tathāgatas*, continue to reincarnate in order to guide and save humans on earth. Okawa’s detail about the Real World is complex and extensive. He explains that the ‘spirit population’ that dwells in the Real World between the fourth and the ninth dimensions exceeds 50 billion.<sup>9</sup> According to this doctrine, the population of the fourth and fifth dimensions make up about 85 per cent of the entire population of the Spirit World.

Another way that the Movement talks about the multi-dimensional universe is in terms of colours. Okawa explains that the roles of the ten Grand Spirits in the ninth dimension can be comprehended in terms of seven colours that he lists as yellow (or gold), white, red, purple, blue, green and silver. These colours are understood as

---

<sup>8</sup> For more details about soul-training see: Okawa, *Shaka no Honshin*, 1997, Ch.4; Kofuku-no-Kagaku ed., 1994, Ch.3: 155-161.

<sup>9</sup> This population is divided between the dimensions as follows: in the ninth (and highest) dimension, or the *Realm of the Saviours*, there are only ten Grand Spirits; in the eighth dimension, or the *Tathāgata Realm*, there are less than five hundred spirits; in the seventh dimension, or the *Bodhisattva Realm*, there are about twenty thousand spirits; in the sixth dimension, or the Realm of Light, there are 7.2 billion; in the fifth dimension there are 26 billion; and in the fourth dimension there are 18 billion – this figure includes 3 billion in Hell. These figures include the seven hundred million that exist in the shadowy side of Heaven, or ‘Minor Heaven’. See: Nijū-isseiiki ed., 1991: 104-5; Okawa, 1997b: 207; 1998b: 81.



manifestations of a spirit's nature, and all humans and spirits belong to one or more colours depending either on their spiritual roles or the tendency of their souls. Yellow is the top of the spectrum, and El Cantare, namely the Eternal Buddha, is considered to belong to this colour, which embodies the qualities of compassion and the Law. White is the colour Jesus belongs to; this colour is the manifestation of love, medical care and salvation. Moses represents red; the colour of justice, righteousness, miracles and military affairs. Zeus and Manu belong to the colour blue; the colour of thought, art, rationality and philosophy. Manu also belongs to green, as does Zoroaster; this colour represents nature, harmony and the structure of the universe. Purple is the colour of Confucius and various Japanese Shintō gods; it represents social order, propriety, ethics and morality. Finally, Isaac Newton is the manifestation of silver; this colour represents science.<sup>10</sup>

It is understood within the Movement, that by choosing one's favourite colour or colours one can find out what kind of spiritual tendencies one might have; for example, those who are attracted to white are said to be related to Jesus' spirit group. It has, however, become rare to hear members discuss the significance of these colours today as the doctrine does not appear to be as significant now as it once was, although it sometimes still appears implicitly in the Movement's ideas. In Kofuku-no-Kagaku's feature films, such as *'The Terrifying Revelations of Nostradamus'* (1994) and *'The Laws of the Sun'* (2000), for example, the colours appear in the representation of the cosmos, but they are not explicitly referred to. This change in emphasis can be explained by the fact that the explanation of colours was intertwined with the Movement's original teachings concerning the highest divine spirits of the ninth dimension, such as Jesus, Confucius and Moses. As discussed in the previous chapter, after 1994 Kofuku-no-Kagaku shifted its emphasis away from referring to many different divine spirits and started to stress the role of Lord El Cantare (or the Buddha).

As discussed above, the 'other world', does not refer exclusively to Heaven, but to the dark realms of Hell, as well as the Astral Realm, which are part of the fourth dimension. Okawa also explains that, apart from Hell and the Astral Realm, the 'other world' is double-sided, and split into what he refers to as 'Major Heaven' or *Omote* 表 and 'Minor Heaven' or *Ura* 裏. Religions, too, can be divided up in the same way, and either reflect the Major or the Minor Heaven. The religions of Minor Heaven, according to the Movement, put a great deal of emphasis on such things as sorcery and

---

<sup>10</sup> Nijū-isseiki ed., 1991: 106-7; Okawa, 1997b: 269-272; 1998b: 106-9; Nostradamus Scenario Project ed., 1994: 29



magic, and practices such as yoga, psychic power, fortune-telling, witchcraft, hypnosis, and various other spiritual phenomena (Kofuku-no-Kagaku ed., 1994: 49-51 and 140-1). In these religions, practices such as polishing the mind, cultivating a spirit of co-operation and love, and pursuing enlightenment by studying the Truth, tend to be neglected. Kofuku-no-Kagaku does not assert that ‘minor’ practices are evil per se, but it does state that they are not appreciated or considered highly by the religions that belong to the Major Heaven.<sup>11</sup>

Significantly, it was only after its doctrinal shift in 1994, that Kofuku-no-Kagaku started to severely criticise religions of the Minor Heaven as well as religions it saw as reflecting the realm of Hell or religions of Hell, and it went on to warn that faith in these religions could be dangerous. I have discussed in the previous chapter, (p.78-81) how this doctrinal change saw the Movement engage in very public and strong criticism of some NRMs, particularly Aum Shinrikyō. Before the doctrinal shift in May 1994, Minor Heaven had not been considered to be particularly dangerous.

I mentioned above that Kofuku-no-Kagaku considers its cosmology not only from the spiritual perspective but also from the historical perspective. This involves an explanation of the ancient history of the Earth, including the history of a number of lost civilisations of the past, including the Mu, Atlantis and Inca civilisations. Their significance lies in the fact that Kofuku-no-Kagaku teaches that civilisations, like human beings, are governed by the law of cause and effect and, therefore, are reincarnated just like humans. In ‘The Trilogy of Salvation’ Okawa reveals that the creation and development of the universe, as well as the existence of spirits, are manifestations of the consciousness of the Primordial Buddha. The Movement’s vision of the universe goes beyond the Solar System, too; it talks about the nebular and external galaxy, and explains that only high divine spirits are able to communicate with these other cosmic realms. According to Okawa, humankind, in a more advanced form, exists on other planets too, and some of these civilisations are up to six thousand years ahead of humankind Okawa also explains that Earth has a great number of ‘visitors from outer space without humans’ knowledge’ (Okawa, 1997a: 56).

According to Kofuku-no-Kagaku, three-dimensional space in the Solar System came into existence about 40 billion years ago. The Solar System itself appeared about ten billion years ago and this was followed by the planets: the planet Mercury came into existence seven billion years ago; Venus six billion years ago; the Earth about four and

---

<sup>11</sup> For more details of ‘Minor Heaven’ see: ‘Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly’, No.106, 12/1995: 36-9; Okawa, 1994d: 348-361; 1996b: 137-142; Kofuku-no-Kagaku ed., 1994: 49-51 and 140-1.



a half billion years ago. What Master Okawa adds to these chronological explanations is that these planets came to exist as live entities in the sense that each planet possesses a consciousness. Along with all the other planets, the Earth, too, is considered to be 'alive'. It exists, along with the 'Grand Sun Consciousness' and the 'Moon Consciousness', in the Tenth Dimension, which, as already mentioned, is beyond the realms of human consciousness.<sup>12</sup> This notion is important because the fact that the Earth is a live entity is related closely to the apocalyptic ideas held by the Movement. This is because the Earth is understood to 'cleanse' itself when it is unhappy with what is happening on its surface, with the possession of nuclear weapons, for example. Kofuku-no-Kagaku revealed its unique link between natural disasters and the possession of nuclear weapons for the first time in its film on Nostradamus (1994), discussed in detail in Chapter VII (p.180-3).

One final point I would like to make regarding Kofuku-no-Kagaku's cosmology is its quasi-scientific view on the relationship between the human consciousness and the Real World in terms of light. This unique world view is threefold. First, Okawa says that the Light of Buddha 'is amplified when it comes into contact with something with which it finds it has an affinity to, whereas it avoids contact with all objects that it is opposed to' (Okawa, 1995b: 26; 2000a: 5). Okawa claims that this is what Jesus meant when he said: *'For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away'* (Matthew 25:29). In other words, those people on earth who have an affinity with the Buddha's Light are granted more Light, while those who reject Light will lose it. Second, the workings of the Light of Buddha through the universe are such that 'creation and destruction occur through the process of condensation or diffusion of the Light of Buddha. For instance, if the Light of Buddha is condensed through willpower for a particular purpose, a spiritual entity may appear' (Okawa, 1995b: 27-8; 2000a: 5). Okawa goes on to say that if one manages to condense one's will further, a material object could appear, and he claims that the creation of both the human spirit and the human body was made according to this law. Third, and perhaps most importantly, Okawa states:

'... the Light of Buddha has wave cycles, the higher frequencies in contact with other high frequencies and the lower frequencies attuned to low frequencies. The Light of Buddha contains those waves that are imbued with the will to communicate, which are transmitted throughout the Grand Cosmos,

---

<sup>12</sup> More explanations of the 'Planetary Consciousness' can be found in Okawa, 1997b: 286-9; 1998b: 114-6; 1994d: 34-44; 1996b: 8-13.



including multi-dimensional space'. (Okawa, 1995b: 28; 2000a: 6)

This means that those people who are able to communicate with high divine spirits are as awakened to the Truth as those spirits. Okawa says, for instance, Prince Shōtoku (574-622) and Kitarō Nishida (1870-1945), a philosopher of the Kyoto School, were both able to communicate with the tathāgatas of the eighth dimensional realm, because they had the spiritual awakening of a tathāgata. Another example is the monk and founder of the True Pure Land School of Buddhism, Shinran (1173-1262), who is said to have been able to communicate with *bodhisattvas* of the seventh dimension, due to his high level of enlightenment (Okawa, 1995b: 29; 2000a: 6). Okawa calls these three natures of the Light of Buddha 'The Physics of the Light of Buddha' (*Bukkō Butsuri-gaku* 仏光物理学).<sup>13</sup>

It is clear from the Movement's teachings, that the cosmos is regarded as an extremely sacred entity within Kofuku-no-Kagaku, and that it is understood to have divine status. The Movement's cosmology is the backdrop~~against~~ which the purpose of each individual's life is explained, both in terms of their individual soul training, and their collective mission to save humankind through the creation of the Utopia. If the cosmology of the Movement is the backdrop for the development of the soul, and the creation of the Utopia, then happiness is its centrepiece, and it is the doctrine of happiness that I shall now consider.

### *Happiness*

The name of Kofuku-no-Kagaku, which translates as the 'science of happiness' gives a good indication of the centrality of the Movement's teachings on happiness. The reason why the Movement calls itself a 'science' is that it understands the human mind to work according to certain rules (*hōsoku*), and by analysing and understanding these rules, Kofuku-no-Kagaku claims that any individual can attain real happiness. In this sense the Movement considers its members, who are also thought of as students, to be researching the 'science of the mind'. In short, Kofuku-no-Kagaku is concerned with what kind of thinking and action can lead humans to happiness; it understands that the way one thinks has the power to change one's life from an unhappy to a happy one. Happiness is of fundamental importance because it is a state of mind that is directly related to the evolution of the soul of the individual. As such, it can be equated with enlightenment as well as progress through the dimensions; the greater one's achievement of happiness, the higher one's dimension. In order to engender a new state

---

<sup>13</sup> For more details of the 'Physics of the Light of Buddha', see: Okawa, 1995b: 25-31; 2000a: 5-7.



of mind, life is taught in the Movement to be a series of meaningful questions, just like exercises in a text book, which test the understanding of concepts. This is because, as one lives one's life, one takes it like a challenge one is being asked to learn about; this is Kofuku-no-Kagaku's positive way of looking at difficult situations and how they give life meaning.

Okawa explains that his teaching on happiness comes from his viewpoint in the Higher Dimensional Realm, from where he can see what society should be like in the future (Okawa, 1994b: 12). Understanding Kofuku-no-Kagaku's concept of happiness is extremely important in order to appreciate the significance of the Movement's popularity, because, as I will discuss in Chapter VII, on 'Kofuku-no-Kagaku's Utopia Through Self-transformation' (p.192), this concept makes many members keen to study the teachings of the Movement, and continue to make great efforts to eventually create a utopian world.

The scientific approach to happiness gives the Movement some very distinctive and unique concepts. The first, which is understood within the context of 'Happiness of the Individual' (*shiteki kōfuku* 私的幸福), is to know the Truth (or the teachings of the Buddha). In other words, the wisdom, or the 'spiritual food', which one can attain by practising the Buddha's teaching constitutes 'happiness'. This is why individual happiness is considered in the Movement to be the same as a state of enlightenment (Kofuku-no-Kagaku ed., 1994: 115).

The Movement's distinctive understanding of 'happiness' can be seen in another of its ideas: 'Happiness that penetrates this world and the other world' (*konoyo to anoyo o tsuranuku kōfuku* この世とあの世を貫く幸福). This 'real' happiness is based on having a 'spiritual outlook upon life' (*reiteki jinsei-kan*: 霊的人生観), considered to be of supreme importance in Kofuku-no-Kagaku, and discussed in detail in the next section below. Part of this outlook, which is particularly relevant to happiness, relates to Okawa's teaching that one can only return to the Real World after death with one's mind/heart (*kokoro*); it is not possible to take back your expensive car, your title, or your money, for example:

'You are not able to bring a great fortune or a large house back with you to the world after death. Your title in this world would not work over there. All you can bring back with you is "your mind".'  
(ibid., 169-70)

It follows on from this that if your mind is full of anger, hatred, jealousy, anxiety and attachment to material things, then that is what you will take back to the Real World.



Okawa goes on to explain that you cannot enter the heavenly world with this kind of mind, because Heaven is full of heavenly energy, such as love and compassion, and these are polar opposites to the negativity in the mind just described. For this reason, therefore, Kofuku-no-Kagaku teaches that Heaven and Hell already exist in this world, and not only in the world after death. This means that as long as you live with a mind full of love and compassion, then you will be full of happiness, and this happiness is what you can bring back ‘home’ when you return to the Real World.

The Movement also explains that cultivating individual happiness ultimately means the spread of happiness and in turn ‘The Happiness of Society’ (*kōteki kōfuku* 公的幸福) or Kofuku-no-Kagaku’s Utopia. The Utopia in other movements, as discussed in Chapter II, is often considered to be the Kingdom of God, which is to come after the Apocalypse. However, Kofuku-no-Kagaku’s Millennium is not considered to be dramatically different from the present physical world, it is simply a world in which everybody can say ‘I am happy’ (ibid., 115).

From its doctrine of happiness, then, it is possible to appreciate that Kofuku-no-Kagaku’s Utopia begins with a little utopia in the mind/heart of each individual, and not with apocalyptic events. I mentioned above, however, that this happiness rests on having the Movement’s spiritual outlook on life, and I shall now discuss this doctrine in more detail.

### *The Spiritual Outlook Upon Life*

I have mentioned that the term ‘real happiness’ is based on the ‘spiritual outlook upon life’, and that this is directly related to one’s state of mind. From the starting point of the mind, Okawa emphasises the importance of knowing both that ‘life is eternal’ and that souls undergo reincarnation. These are the Movement’s two most fundamental beliefs, and are necessary to the achievement of ‘real’ happiness. ‘Eternal life’ does not mean an everlasting physical life on earth, but everlasting life as a spirit (ibid., 155-161.)

Kofuku-no-Kagaku regards materialism and atheism as evil, because both these ideologies cause people to think that death is the end of everything. As long as people think that life is experienced only once, they will live in pursuit of gratification in this world, ‘this-worldly happiness’, and consequently develop attachment to material goods, such as money, property and social status. According to Kofuku-no-Kagaku, the greatest task for all humans on earth is to ‘polish the mind’, something it is believed within the Movement that their innermost spirit knows, but which they have forgotten



amongst the material distractions of the phenomenal world. People do not realise that it is they who generate their own unhappiness and suffering through their attachment to earthly desires. What is wrong with the modern world, according to Kofuku-no-Kagaku, is anything that cultivates thoughts or attitudes of mind that are ‘wrong’, wrong in the sense that they distract the soul from its true evolutionary purpose.

By realising the truth of eternal life and understanding the law of reincarnation, Kofuku-no-Kagaku explains, people can comprehend why it is necessary to make an effort to live virtuously, to act well, to love and respect others, and to cultivate happiness in their everyday lives. In order to cultivate this happiness, the Movement teaches the ‘Principles of Happiness’ which I shall now discuss.

### *The Principles of Happiness*

I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter that ‘The Principles of Happiness’, also known as the ‘Fourfold Path’, consists of ‘Love’ (*Ai* 愛) ‘Knowledge’ (*Chi* 知), ‘Self-Reflection’ (*Hansei* 反省) and ‘Development’ (*Hatten* 発展). Each one is an important skill that all the followers of Kofuku-no-Kagaku are encouraged to practise in order to attain what is referred to as the ‘Right Mind’.

‘The Principle of Love’ is considered to be the most important of the four principles (ibid., 64-5). Okawa explains that many people do not realise that love is for giving, but, are instead preoccupied with taking it from others. Such people tend to think that someone else is going to make them happy, but the idea of this ‘taking love’ is in fact the very cause of unhappiness. This is because people who depend on taking love from others suffer because they cannot always get the love they are craving for. Kofuku-no-Kagaku emphasises that ‘giving love’ is the beginning of happiness, because it not only breaks dependency on another to give one love, it also breaks the fear that giving love means losing love. It teaches instead that ‘You do not have to worry about losing something by giving love, because the love you give becomes yours, because this is the Law’ (ibid., 65). The reward of the love one gives is believed to come from the Buddha/God; the more love one gives the closer one comes to the Buddha/God and the more love one feels - this is the ‘real’ happiness of all human beings. This principle is fundamental to the Movement’s ideas concerning the Utopia, for when the world is filled with people who want to give love to others, the Utopia will have been realised on earth.

Okawa also teaches that love has several stages (Okawa, 1994d; 1996b, Ch.3, Sections 6 and 7), linked to the dimensions of the universe. These stages are: instinctive



love of the fourth dimension; fundamental love of the fifth; spiritually nurturing love of the sixth; forgiving love of the seventh; 'Existence' as love of the eighth; and God's love of the ninth (Okawa, 1994d: 152-161; 1996b: 61).

In 'The Laws of the Sun' (Okawa, 1994d; 1996b: Ch.3, Section 9), Okawa explains the relationship between the traditional Buddhist doctrine 'The Noble Eightfold Path' and his distinctive 'Development of Love', which is unique to Kofuku-no-Kagaku. As indicated above, love has several stages, and in order to be able to give the higher stages of love, the state of a person's enlightenment has to be equally high. For example, in order to practise what it calls 'forgiving love' one has to have attained bodhisattva status, which belongs to the seventh dimension. From this comparison, Kofuku-no-Kagaku also declares that Christianity and Buddhism, though these historical religions have often been seen as different in orientation, share much in common (Kofuku-no-Kagaku ed., 1994: 85). In Kofuku-no-Kagaku, it is understood that pursuing enlightenment means aiming at a higher stage of love. The level of enlightenment achieved and the level of love you give to others is, therefore, proportionate. Kofuku-no-Kagaku strongly believes that this thought is the key to its religious reformation and aims not only to integrate 'Love' and 'Enlightenment' but oriental and occidental civilisations as well. The Movement believes that by putting these two ideas together, they can also bring together these two civilisations (ibid., 84-5); instead of difference, which creates misunderstanding, they seek parallels which promote understanding.

The second Principle of Happiness, 'Knowledge', refers to knowledge of the Buddha's Truth, with which one can grasp a spiritual point of view (*rei-teki na shiten* 霊的な視点) instead of a 'this worldly' point of view (*konoyo-teki na shiten* この世的な視点), as discussed above in the 'spiritual outlook on life'. One of the most important aspects of 'Knowledge', the Movement explains, is that once it is grasped, a person becomes emancipated or 'truly free' (Okawa, 1990b: 59-60). This is because problems can be analysed and solved using this spiritual point of view (Kofuku-no-Kagaku ed., 1994: 88-9). For example, one will realise that a problem has its root cause in a materialistic or egotistic attitude. Another aspect of this is that once a person is free of his or her own problems, they are able to help others solve their problems too. Okawa explains that the actual act of obtaining this 'Knowledge' is directly related to happiness, something Okawa calls the 'joy of the soul' (ibid., 90). The Movement also compares it directly with the truth spoken of in the Bible: 'you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free' (John 8:32) (Okawa, 1990b: 61). The fact that Okawa is teaching on



earth at this time and revealing this 'Knowledge' makes members of Kofuku-no-Kagaku feel that this particular time in history is a great opportunity for them to make a lot of spiritual progress (Kofuku-no-Kagaku ed., 1994: 92). This is another reason why so many members of the Movement are eager to participate in the Movement, and to study its doctrine.

'Self-reflection', the third of the Principles of Happiness, is regarded as essential in order to bring about a soul's evolution, as well as necessary for human beings to experience happiness in their everyday lives; I shall discuss its actual practice below under the section 'Life is a series of meaningful questions'. The importance of 'Self-reflection' for the Movement can be summed up in the following expression, which is very well-known to the members: 'Without self-reflection there is no enlightenment'. 'Self-reflection' is also described as an action that regains the 'shining-self', the self understood to dwell in the Real World.

'Self-reflection' is also very important because it is believed to be a necessary condition in order for a soul to return to the Heavenly World. This is because one has to align one's mind, either after death or while still alive, to the mind of the Buddha or God. This alignment can only be achieved by individuals themselves, not by any intervention from the Buddha. As long as an individual clings to wrong thoughts which are against the will of the Buddha, then a return through Heaven's door to the Real World is impossible.

The fourth and final principle, 'Development', is defined as an attitude of hope for the achievement of happiness, both for oneself and for others (ibid., 68). 'Development' also refers to the fact that once a person has obtained happiness by studying and practising the Truth, that person then needs to expand the happiness by helping others to experience it too; not only because this is the way to establish the Utopia, but also because by helping others and sharing happiness with them, an even greater sense of happiness is experienced (ibid., 68). Another aspect of this principle is that prosperity in this world is considered to be good in the Movement, and members are encouraged to develop their success in this world in the 'right way'. Economic prosperity is good as long as people know what the Truth is and intend to contribute to the establishment of the Utopia with their prosperity (ibid., 173-4). Okawa explains that the economy has to be stable and always developing, because an unstable economy and recession are obstacles to the Utopia and, therefore, evil (Okawa, 1994a: 243).

If spiritual training has not been allowed to happen, and the mind clings to the phenomenal world after death, souls cannot enter the Heavenly Realms, but must spend



time in Hell, which I shall now discuss.

### *The Significance of 'Hell'*

According to Okawa, at the present time, over 50 per cent of the dead go to one of the dark realms, which are collectively called 'Hell' (Kofuku-no-Kagaku ed., 1994: 259-60). This is usually caused by a variety of wrong thoughts, beliefs and ideologies, such as materialism, atheism, and the teachings of wrong religious.

Okawa says that all human beings are given free will, and it is completely up to them how they use it. For this reason one has the potential to become a highly enlightened being, like an angel or a bodhisattva, or to go to Hell. Hell, therefore, is considered to be the place where souls go when they have made incorrect use of their free will while on earth. In Hell, they have a chance to reflect upon their wrong thoughts and actions. Wrong thoughts are, as discussed above, such things as anger, jealousy, pessimism, hatred, lust, egotism, falsehood, materialism, atheism, and various desires for this-worldly things, such as money and social status. Hell itself is made up of various realms, which reflect the particular wrong thoughts that afflict a mind. According to Kofuku-no-Kagaku's teaching, for example, the Hell of *Gaki* 餓鬼 (*Preta* in Sanskrit), or the Hell of Lust, is a realm for those souls who are greedy, full of lust for and attachment to this-worldly things; the Hell of *Ashura* 阿修羅 (*Asura* in Sanskrit) is a realm for those angry and destructive souls that kill, blame and talk ill of others. Souls with this type of mind, who not only believed in the wrong ideologies but also actively preached these 'wrong' principles and misled others, will go to the severest realm, the Hell of *Muken* 無間, or, what the Movement calls, the Abysmal Hell.<sup>14</sup>

Okawa states:

'There are all kinds of people living in our world, but the sick are not a separate race so we have hospitals to look after them. In the same way, there are souls in the other world who are sick in spirit, and hell is where they go to discipline themselves and undergo rehabilitation.'

He goes on:

'A healthy person can be taught to drive a car, ride a bicycle, run in long and short distance races or to jump, but a sick person may not be capable of any of these things. A sick person has to learn how to use crutches, or to walk with somebody supporting them by the arm.'

(Okawa, 1997b: 36-7; 1998b: 11)

In this sense, souls in Hell are considered to be ill, mainly because they are in a state of

---

<sup>14</sup> See: 'The Laws of Eternity', 1998: 15-6; 'Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly', No.146, 8/1997: 34; Kofuku-no-Kagaku ed., 1994: 144-7.



malnutrition from lack of love, and crave more love from others without knowing that love is really for giving. Hell, therefore, was not created by the Buddha or God, but by humans, by their wrong thoughts. Kofuku-no-Kagaku, therefore, regards Hell as a hospital for souls where they stay temporarily, not the world of eternal judgement (Kofuku-no-Kagaku ed., 1994: Ch.3, Section 4). When a soul has managed to complete his or her self-reflection, they can eventually return to the Heavenly Realms, and there await the next opportunity to reincarnate on earth. There are three steps that Kofuku-no-Kagaku teaches for what it calls a ‘quick way out’ of Hell, whether one is on earth or actually in Hell, and these are: first, to learn what is right and wrong by studying the Buddha’s Truth; second, to live according to this Truth by choosing what is ‘right’; and third, to live by giving love instead of taking it from others.<sup>15</sup> The above illustrates the fact that Kofuku-no-Kagaku intertwines its theology with practical teachings, and in the next section I shall consider this practical emphasis further.

*‘Life is a series of meaningful questions’: the curriculum for soul-training*

Kofuku-no-Kagaku understands earth to be the best place for souls to develop, because all the problems and challenges it presents are understood to be the most appropriate ‘exam-questions’ or didactic challenges for souls. All the difficult questions one faces in life reveal the kind of curriculum one’s soul needs to follow in order for it to develop. Once a soul has managed to find the correct answers to the questions or challenges that it faces, it will no longer have to face the same test in future lives.

This is how the students of the Movement see their world around them. Importantly, in this respect, it is considered to be incorrect to attribute one’s unhappiness or dissatisfaction to things, people or the environment around one; instead it is necessary to reflect on what within oneself is causing the problems, and come to realise the truth of a situation one is experiencing. This is the practice of self-reflection, and this is why it is said in the Movement that: ‘Without self-reflection there is no enlightenment’. This clearly suggests that Kofuku-no-Kagaku’s Utopia is concerned with self-transformation and while it is only possible to speculate on where Okawa found inspiration for these ideas, the closest to them would perhaps be Theravāda Buddhism. Interestingly, however, as mentioned above, the idea that happiness and enlightenment are synonymous, as well as the fact that enlightenment can be compared to love, is unique to the Movement. I shall now go on to discuss Okawa as El Cantare and the Buddha.

---

<sup>15</sup> ‘Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly’, No.96, 2/1995: 68-9



*Okawa as El Cantare and the Buddha*

Okawa's status in the Movement is understood to be the Buddha, in the sense that he is both the Enlightened One and the reincarnation of the historical figure, Gautama Buddha, and the embodiment of El Cantare, the Highest Grand Spirit of the Terrestrial Spirit Group, also called the 'Eternal Buddha'. The 'Eternal Buddha' is understood to be directly connected to the 'Primordial Buddha', or Creator God. In this sense, I have encountered many in the Movement who believe in Okawa as the manifestation of the Creator. Okawa is the central figure of worship in Kofuku-no-Kagaku in his identity as El Cantare. In other words, the members have faith in the divinity of El Cantare, and take refuge in this faith. This worship gives them comfort, energy, courage, hope, steadiness, and a sense of being guided and looked after. For this reason, the Movement's *Qohonzon* 御本尊, object of worship, carries a photograph of Okawa in his role as Lord El Cantare. According to the Movement, El Cantare has chosen to be incarnated in Japan, because it is where both Oriental and Occidental civilisations are believed to have merged; this is important because when these two civilisations can live side by side with understanding and harmony, an important element of the Utopia will have been achieved. Japan is, therefore, considered to be a perfect environment from which Okawa can carry out his mission to lead a utopian movement that will herald a new age in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. According to Okawa, El Cantare's role is twofold: one as a Saviour, in the same way that *Amitābha Buddha* is worshipped as a saviour figure, and the other as *Mahāvairocana*, the essence of the Buddha and as such a representation of enlightenment (Okawa, 1994d: 363; 1996b: 143).

Weber suggests that there are two types of prophet, first, the exemplary type that points out the path to salvation through exemplary living, and second, the emissary type that addresses its demands to the world in the name of God.<sup>16</sup> In my view, Okawa seems to play both these roles. As the Buddha, he embodies the right way to live on earth, and as such is the exemplary type and provides a role model for all those seeking enlightenment. His identity as El Cantare, the Saviour Buddha figure, is the emissary type, who brings the hope of salvation.

El Cantare is understood to be needed on Earth at the present time because Kofuku-no-Kagaku sees the modern world to be in a state of crisis, caused by wrong thoughts that result in wars and various other types of conflict on a personal to a global scale. The contemporary world is, therefore, understood to be covered with dark thoughts, which may trigger all kinds of cataclysmic disasters (Kofuku-no-Kagaku ed.,

---

<sup>16</sup> Weber, in Gerth & Wright Mills (trans. & ed.), 1991: 285



1994: 32-3). I have mentioned above that in Kofuku-no-Kagaku it is believed that like attracts like; if one cultivates the Light of Buddha, more light will be attracted. It is important to realise that this is also the case in the opposite direction; if one cultivates dark thoughts, more dark thoughts will follow. In a world where dark thoughts are believed to outweigh the Light, the need to create the Utopia becomes particularly clear, because it reverses the process, or tips the balance back the other way. Without El Cantare's salvific intervention, at a time when dark thoughts have taken hold, the evolutionary process of humankind cannot function.

The salvific mission of El Cantare at this time of crisis also applies to the members themselves. I have already shown that their personal enlightenment contributes to the creation of the Utopia, but it is also believed within the Movement, that they too have chosen to be reincarnated at this time to help in the Movement's salvific mission, and have done so before in previous incarnations. Many members believe that they were once born in Ancient Greece, when Hermes was alive, and again in India when Gautama Buddha was teaching. Now, again, they believe they have been reincarnated in Japan in Lord El Cantare's presence.<sup>17</sup> These members believe they all share a common mission, namely to pursue their own individual 'soul-training' and at the same time contribute to the 'creation of the Utopia'. In this sense, Okawa's followers understand this moment in history to be what they call the 'miracle age' or *kiseki no jidai* 奇蹟の時代, because they believe it to be an exceptionally rare and powerful moment in history, when they have the chance to be born at the same time as their Spiritual Master again, and pursue the salvation which has engaged them for many thousands of years.

All the intricately linked teachings detailed above are presented to the members by way of published literature, lectures, ceremonies, meditation sessions and various other kinds of media. I shall now go on to discuss these below, beginning with the published literature.

### 5.3 Publications

The number of Ryuho Okawa's books is said to exceed 300 titles (some sources say 400), some of which have sold over a million copies - Okawa's main book 'The Laws of the Sun' which has sold more copies than any other of his books, was said to have

---

<sup>17</sup> 'Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly', No.124, 6/1997: 39



sold 10 million copies by January 2000<sup>18</sup> ('Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly', No.155, 1/2000: 32; IRH Press website). According to Kofuku-no-Kagaku, by 1997, over 50 million copies of all its titles had been sold worldwide.

The different styles Okawa employs in his writings appear to be very important to his message: first of these styles are the spiritual discourses between Okawa and a number of spirits, that were taped, transcribed and published<sup>19</sup>; second are the lectures and seminar-talks that have been recorded and published, almost verbatim; and third are his writings, the first of which was 'The Laws of the Sun'. Not all the titles published by Kofuku-no-Kagaku are written by Okawa; his wife, Kyoko, has published a number of books, too, mainly for female readers. Other books have been published under Kofuku-no-Kagaku's name or the name of its Public Relations Department, rather than Okawa's name. These include a few books and magazines, including comics, as well as several text books, mainly provided for the members so they can study the teachings systematically. Some of Okawa's highest ranked disciples have also published titles from IRH Press.

The language employed in Okawa's books is extremely accessible and easy to read; some parts are almost poetic. The English versions are carefully translated to reflect the original Japanese versions as closely as possible. For example, in *The Laws of the Sun*, in the chapter entitled 'The River of Love' Okawa writes as follows:

'Love is progress. A single element of love makes for a single element of progress; a single spark of love creates a single spark of light. Days filled with love are days filled with progress, days filled with light. For God waits at love's destination. Where there is love there is no retreat. Where there is love there is no fear. In love there is only progress. In love there is only improvement. Love is simply the act of flying to God's side.'  
(Okawa, 1994d: 139; 1996b: 52)

Okawa does not use old fashioned or technical language or complex sentence construction and avoids using difficult Chinese characters in his writings, which is unlike more traditional religious literature. Instead, he tends to use modern language, employing up to the minute words, such as English words that have come into common usage in the Japanese language today. This could be one of the important contributing factors to his success in appealing to so many readers.

The number of publications has reduced somewhat over the last few years and now only one or two new titles are published each year, although they still hit the best-

---

<sup>18</sup> 'The Challenge of Religion' has sold 1.7 million copies and 'Love - Infinity' has sold 1 million copies. See: 'Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly', No.119, 1/1997: 51.

<sup>19</sup> See Chapter IV, (p.66-7) for more details concerning these books.



seller list. In 1999, for example, Okawa's 'The Laws of Prosperity' (*Han-ei no Hō* 繁栄の法) was fourth in the 1999 best-seller list, his second book that year reaching twelfth in the same list.<sup>20</sup> 'The Laws of the Sun' became one of the best-selling books again in the year 2000 in Japan, due to the release of the Movement's third feature film with the same title, as did another book published in early 2001, called 'The Laws of Miracles' (*Kiseki no Hō* 奇蹟の法).

My research results show that over 60 per cent of the members decided to join Kofuku-no-Kagaku after reading books written by Okawa (p.166). The Japanese author Tamio Kageyama says he had read over 45 titles by the time he decided to join the Movement (Kageyama, 1992: 247). This indicates that publishing is a vital part of the Movement's activities. Okawa stresses, however, that while a large number of books might be available, they all share one prime purpose, that of understanding the Movement's fundamental scripture, *Shōshin Hōgo* 正心法語, or 'The Dharma of the Right Mind' (Kofuku-no-Kagaku ed., 1994: 34).

One way the Movement guides readers through its many publications, is by dividing the various titles into specific groups, although titles sometimes overlap different groups. For example, the following nine titles are presented as the basic reading list for an understanding of the Movement's doctrine: (1) 'The Laws of the Sun'; (2) 'The Golden Laws'; (3) 'The Laws of Eternity'; (4) 'The Rebirth of Buddha'; (5) 'The Eternal Buddha'; (6) 'A Revolution of Happiness'; (7) 'The Essence of Buddha'; (8) 'What is the Ultimate State of Enlightenment?'; and (9) 'The Testimony of the Buddha'.<sup>21</sup> Ten titles constitute Kofuku-no-Kagaku's 'introductory books' and include 'The Laws of the Sun', 'A Revolution of Happiness' and 'The Origin of Happiness'. Eight titles constitute the spirit of Buddhism and include, 'The Eternal Buddha', 'The Challenge of the Mind', 'The Rebirth of Buddha' and 'The Essence of Buddha'. Thirteen titles help overcome adversity, including 'The Laws of Miracles', 'Invincible Thinking' and 'Discovery of Life'. Eleven titles address success in life include 'Work and Love' and 'The Laws of Prosperity' and 'Love, Nurture and Forgive'. Fifteen titles address Kofuku-no-Kagaku's worldview on many issues, such as politics and the role of religion, and include 'The Challenge of Religion', 'Frankly Speaking' and 'The Age of Choice in Religion'. Greek Mythology is addressed in such titles as 'From Love to Prayer', and 'Love is Like the Wind', on which Kofuku-no-

---

<sup>20</sup> 'Asahi Shimbun Japan Almanac 2001': 260

<sup>21</sup> This list is taken from Kofuku-no-Kagaku's website, provided by the Movement's own publishing company, IRH Press Co., Ltd., (<http://www.irhpress.co.jp>).



Kagaku based a feature film. Eleven titles specifically relate to women and their true happiness, and include 'How to Catch Happiness', 'Happiness as a Mother', 'How to Educate Angels' and 'A Gift for the Future'; virtually all the publications written by Okawa's wife Kyoko belong to this group.

Here I shall consider the content of some of the particularly significant pieces of literature from these groups, 'The Laws of the Sun', 'The Essence of Buddha', 'Work and Love' and 'Love is Like the Wind'.

**Figure 9. 'The Laws of the Sun', Japanese, English and Portuguese publications**



*These are the Japanese, English and Portuguese versions of 'The Laws of the Sun'. First published in Japanese in 1987, the book was revised in 1994 and later printed in foreign language versions. The Movement's latest feature film, also called 'The Laws of the Sun', is based on this book and was released in the Autumn of 2000. This book became one of the best-selling books in Japan in the same year. It is now translated into English, German, Chinese, Korean and Portuguese. Before these foreign publications, there were only a few titles available to non-Japanese readers, all of which were only translated into English, and all published by the Movement's own publishing company in Japan, namely, 'IRH Press' (Kofuku-no-Kagaku Shuppan 幸福の科学出版).*

The original version of 'The Laws of the Sun' was published on 20<sup>th</sup> June 1987 by the Japanese publisher Tsuchiya Shoten, some eight months after the establishment of the Movement. It was Okawa's first book to break away from his spiritual message titles and is regarded by the Movement as the 'Book of Miracles'. This is because the Law that is explained in the book, based on Buddhist thought, is considered to be the core of its salvation movement and it is the first book that explains the Movement's theology systematically, with which it is believed humanity can overcome a crucial apocalyptic period and create a Golden Future.

Its publication is said by the Movement to have been predicted by Nostradamus in the 16th Century, discussed below in Footnote 23 (Kofuku-no-Kagaku ed., 1994: 251-2; Okawa, 1990a: 3). The Movement claims that the words in the book are 'higher



than the Enlightenment of the Buddha or the teachings of Jesus, and can unify all the religions and lead people of all religious traditions to real happiness' (Kofuku-no-Kagaku ed., 1994: 257). The Movement also believes that its content will be the new 'common sense' of the 21st Century, and the Holy Scripture of the future.<sup>22</sup>

Okawa says that 'The Laws of the Sun' indicates the outline, the height and the direction of Kofuku-no-Kagaku as a whole', and it is the 'basic of the basics of the Movement' ('Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly', No.167, 1/2001: 3). Okawa says he wrote the original version in just over ten days, while receiving inspiration from his own 'subconscious' that resides in the Heavenly World (Okawa, 1987: 4).

Three years after the first edition was published, a 'pocket version' was published by Kadokawa Shoten (1990), a major publisher in Japan. Although the pocket edition is unedited, it has a different and unique preface, which states:

'About 500 years ago, the well-known prophet, Nostradamus, left a message: "*When the 'Laws of the Sun' are revealed in the 'Country of the East', my terrifying revelations of Eschatology will end their mission and the New Era will begin*". This book is the very book that Nostradamus foretold.<sup>23</sup> This book was written through revelations from the High Dimensional World, and the content will be the core of this great salvation Movement, with Japan at its centre. This is also a book that enlightens you. As well as providing the most appropriate practice for each and every person to become awakened, the secrets of the High Dimensional World and the creation of the universe, as

<sup>22</sup> See: Okawa, 1994d, Preface: IX.

<sup>23</sup> In his famous series of writings, *The Centuries*, Nostradamus mentioned some of the key words that Kofuku-no-Kagaku refers to, such as 'the Sun', 'Hermes', 'Asia' and 'the East'. Okawa's interpretation, that Nostradamus foresaw the revelation of the 'Laws of the Sun' coming from the 'country of the East' with which his prophecies would complete their mission, is probably derived from three different symbolic quatrains in the Centuries by Nostradamus, namely Ch.1:48, Ch.5:53 and Ch.10:75. Under a veil of ambiguity caused by Nostradamus' writing style, the first quatrain is 1:48: *'Vingt ans du regne de la Lune passez, Sept mil ans autre tiendra sa monarchie, Quand le Soleil prendra ses iours lassez, Lors accomplir & fine ma Prophetie'*, which can be translated as: 'When twenty years of the Moon's reign have passed, another will take up his reign for seven thousand years, When the exhausted Sun takes up his cycle, then my prophecy and threats will be accomplished'. The second quatrain is 5:53: *'La loy du Sol & Venus contendus, Appropriant l'esprit de prophetie: Ne l'un ne l'autre ne seront entendus, Par sol tiendra la loy du grand Messie'*, which can be translated as: 'The law of the Sun and of Venus in strife, Appropriating the spirit of prophecy: Neither the one nor the other will be understood, The law of the great Messiah will hold through the Sun.'. The last quatrain is 10:75: *'Tant attendu ne reuiendra iamais, Dedans l'Europe en Asie apparoistra: Un de la ligue yssu du grand Hermes, Et sur tous Roys des Orients croistra'*, which could be translated as: 'Long awaited he will never return, In Europe, he will appear in Asia, One of the league issued from the great Hermes, And he will grow over all the Kings of the East'. There are many different interpretations of these verses, due to Nostradamus' extremely ambiguous writing style. However, as the translations above indicate, a few translators interpret Nostradamus as saying that a certain figure will come from Great Hermes in Asia, and reign. He will be greater than the 'Kings of the East', and the law of the Sun by the Messiah will be maintained by the state of the Sun. When the Sun takes over, his (Nostradamus') prophecies will be accomplished. As discussed, according to Kofuku-no-Kagaku doctrine, in one of his past lives Okawa is believed to have been the figure Hermes of Greek Mythology. Hermes was then reincarnated as the Buddha and now, as Ryuho Okawa, he has published the book called 'The Laws of the Sun' in the country of the east. Taking these points into account, although Kofuku-no-Kagaku has almost completely removed Nostradamus and his predictions from any discussions within the Movement since 1996, Okawa, at least at one point, was implying that he was actually *the* one that Nostradamus had foretold would arrive.



well as the complete picture of human history will be revealed for the very first time in our history.’ (Okawa, *Taiyō no Hō* - ‘The Laws of the Sun’ - Pocket Version, Kadokawa, 1990a, 3-4, my own translation)

The book begins with Okawa’s distinctive cosmology, and is then followed by an explanation of the nature of Buddhist teachings; love and enlightenment; human history and details of lost civilisations that go as far back as 760,000 years; autobiographical details; and concludes with Okawa’s mission through his identity as El Cantare.

In *Shaka no Honshin* or ‘The Essence of Buddha’ (1988, revised in 1997, English version 2002), Okawa explains the essence of the historical figure Gautama Buddha’s thinking, overlapping both Theravāda and Mahāyāna perspectives. His distinctive view is that the Buddha’s teachings are actually twofold, first, the historical teachings delivered 2,500 years ago when Buddha lived on earth, and second, teachings that Buddha has continued to deliver, by means of guidance to Buddhists living on earth, after his return to the Heavenly World. Okawa describes what Buddha experienced and thought before and after his attainment of Enlightenment, as well as well-known doctrines such as the Noble Eightfold Path and Cause and Effect, and how they can be applied in the modern age. One important point is the difference Okawa understands between religion and philosophy; he claims that religion is the scientific research of the Real World and that without its consideration ideas are mere philosophy (Okawa, 1997c: 157). This book constitutes a very significant presentation of the Movement’s Buddhist views.

The book ‘Work and Love’, published in Japanese only (*Shigoto to Ai* 仕事と愛) (1996) specifically addresses how to become very successful at work, principally by finding one’s inner talents and cultivating their use, even in the face of adversity. It also includes practical advice on how to approach success; instead of simply working long hours for example, the book advises that people should work efficiently for two hours instead, in other words concentrate on quality of work not quantity.

The book ‘Love is Like the Wind’ (1991) again only available in Japanese (*Aiwa Kaze no Gotoku* 愛は風の如く), presents a story of Greek mythology surrounding the life of Hermes and Aphrodite, who, according to Okawa, were married. The story is presented from Okawa’s own unique viewpoint - Okawa is believed to have been Hermes in a previous incarnation, and his wife Kyoko is believed to have been Aphrodite. The story emphasises Hermes’ role as a political leader as well as a



religious teacher, and how he worked to promote trade in Ancient Greece; this provides a backdrop for Kofuku-no-Kagaku's attitudes concerning economic prosperity.

The publishing activities of Kofuku-no-Kagaku have changed somewhat over time. It now publishes far fewer titles than it used to. In 1988, for example, 29 books and four booklets were published, whereas in the last few years only one or two titles have been published each year. Although the number of publications has dropped dramatically, the profile of the books remains high; Kofuku-no-Kagaku titles tend to stay in the best-seller list in Japan throughout the year. In 1999, for example, Okawa's books 'The Laws of Prosperity' (*Han'ei no Hō* 繁栄の法) and 'The Syndrome of the Unhappy' (*Kofuku-ni-Narenai Shōkō-gun* 幸福になれない症候群), were fourth and twelfth respectively in the best-seller list.<sup>24</sup> In 2001 'The Laws of Miracles' (*Kiseki no Hō* 奇蹟の法) and 'The Origin of Love' (*Ai no Genten* 愛の原点) appeared in the top ten of the best-seller list. In 2002 'The Laws of Triumph' (*Jōshō no Hō* 常勝の法) was also within the top ten throughout the year.

Apart from the publications that appear in bookshops, there are a number of books produced by the Movement that are only available to members. These titles often do not have any fixed price, but are obtained by making a donation (often considerably higher than prices paid for the Movement's regular publications) and are thus 'received' rather than 'bought'. They have special significance as they are considered to be holy scripture rather than simply religious writings. One such title is Okawa's autobiographical work '*Wakaki-hi no El Cantare*', or 'El Cantare during his Youth'. Some out of print books have been reintroduced in this way, and these include the spiritual messages withdrawn during the doctrinal reformation in 1994. It is not clear exactly why the books have been reintroduced, but in relation to the related subject of donations, Numata has pointed out that the amount of financial contributions or donations required from the members to support the Movement's activities is getting higher compared to its early years as a study group. Numata also points out that this might be preventing the further rapid expansion of the membership (Numata, 1995: 243).

Apart from its books, another way in which the Movement keeps its membership up to date with its ideas is through periodicals; currently (May, 2002) the Movement issues four different periodicals, all either targeting a slightly different audience, or discussing different themes, as I will discuss below. The advertising in the periodicals concerns information about the Movement such as its own publications, and activities.

---

<sup>24</sup> Asahi Shimbun ed., 2000: 260



The Movement's official monthly journal, '*Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly*' (月刊 幸福の科学), which began in April 1987, is now available in English, French, Chinese, Korean, and Portuguese. The journal features a monthly essay, by Okawa, which can range from Buddhist themes to business, education and the social system. Okawa's wife, Kyoko, also writes an essay for each issue, and addresses such topics as education and the family. Both Okawa's and Kyoko's articles are eventually compiled into books. The topical news from the Movement is also featured, along with information about its retreat centres, and courses. Messages are presented in many formats, such as the cartoon section illustrated below.

Figure 10. A cartoon section from '*Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly*' (Jan '02), courtesy of Kofuku-no-Kagaku (to be read from top right to bottom left).



The second periodical is called '*The Dendō*' ザ伝道, 1996-, which means 'preaching' or 'missionary work'. This is quite a direct title for an NRM's monthly journal. It contains a short essay by Okawa and two or three stories told by the members, based on their actual experiences, and is a good example of the Movement's practical approach to achieving happiness. These experiences detail how members have overcome their problems and improved their situation, in cases such as illness and difficult relationships. Perhaps more importantly in relation to the Movement's teachings concerning a person's mind, or their outlook on life, however, in some stories



the situation has not necessarily changed, but the member has managed to obtain happiness by finding meaning in their suffering. This journal introduces the power of self-realisation and of 'self-change' that enables people to feel happiness even in difficult circumstances.

The third periodical is mainly for children and their parents and is called '*The Hermes Angels*' ザ ヘルメスエンゼルス, 1996- and presents the core messages of the Movement to a very young audience with drawings and simple stories. The Movement believes that religious education is very important for young children, and stresses that it is the responsibility of parents to introduce their children to these concepts. The fourth periodical is called '*The Liberty*', 1995- . This monthly magazine, which is targeted at non-members as well as members, is the Movement's only monthly magazine that is available in local bookshops (it costs ¥500 or approximately £2.50). In this magazine, Kofuku-no-Kagaku refers a great deal to secular as well as public issues, and promotes what it believes to be the role of religion in society. For example, in a discussion on cloning, the Movement argued that the cloning of humans may lead to new racial problems, such as slavery or discrimination (June 1997 and March 1999). In another article, the Movement suggested that homosexuals and trans-sexuals, while they might simply be considered to be expressing their freedom, should in fact accept the sexuality of the body they were born with rather than seek to change it (August 1998). The Movement also broadcasts a weekly FM radio programme called '*A Morning Call from an Angel*' 天使のモーニングコール. This 30 minute programme, sent out early in the morning at the weekend, has been broadcast in Japan by Kofuku-no-Kagaku since 1991. The programme introduces different themes of the Movement's teachings and plays music that encourages relaxation.

It is important to note that most of the Movement's literature is directed towards the achievement of happiness, which, as discussed above, is equated with enlightenment. This means that the Movement is ultimately concerned with practice, which I shall now discuss.

#### 5.4 Practice

Practice in the Movement can perhaps best be understood if it is divided into two types, what I would call 'everyday practice' on the one hand, and 'ritual practice' on the other. By 'everyday practice' I mean how one lives one's daily life in the wider society as a member of Kofuku-no-Kagaku, according to the core teaching of the Principles of Happiness. For example, practice of *wagen aigo*, which means using a gentle face and



gentle words in one's dealings with others, is used to engender harmony and love rather than aggression. Another example is to eliminate laziness and to work harder, and making donations and engaging in voluntary work are also considered important practices. These are ongoing practices, which are supported by the Movement's structured 'ritual practice', by which I mean its many events, sessions and rituals, such as the recitation of prayers, meditation and self-reflection sessions, as well as participation in study sessions and major festivals.

The core practice in Kofuku-no-Kagaku is the 'Quest for the Right Mind', which refers to the practice of the Movement's Principles of Happiness, or Fourfold Path of 'Love', 'Knowledge', 'Self-Reflection' and 'Development'. This Quest is reflected in the ritual of the 'Pledge of Devotion to the Three Jewels' (*Sanki Seigan-shiki* 三歸誓願式); that is the Buddhist 'Three Jewels' or *San-Pō* 三宝 (*tri-ratna* in Sanskrit) of the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. Inspired by Okawa's own example as the Buddha, and under his guidance, followers practise his teachings, the Dharma. With the 'Quest for the Right Mind', that is, the mind of the Buddha/God, the task of every single follower is to achieve his or her own self-transformation. Kofuku-no-Kagaku itself is regarded as the Sangha, the community of people whose common aim is to contribute to the performance of the Buddha's will and create happiness for the whole of society, that is the Utopia. The actual ritual of the Pledge is a small ceremony, overseen by a priest and a few supporting members. It is either held in a branch office (*shibu*) or one of the major temples, depending on the wishes of the participants. After making the Pledge, the member receives the three main prayer books of the Movement – three small books that are exclusive to those who have undergone the ritual. These prayer books become part of another core practice for members who have taken the Pledge, as they use the prayers contained in them in daily recitation, either at home or together at the branch offices and temples. The prayers, the principal of which is the Movement's fundamental Sūtra, *Shōshin Hōgo* 正心法語, or 'The Dharma of the Right Mind' remind the members of the commitment made in the Pledge, as well as their mission to create the Utopia. It should be noted that, unlike other NRMs that include Buddhist teachings, such as the Nichiren based schools that pay homage to the Lotus Sūtra, Kofuku-no-Kagaku does not rely on any traditional Buddhist scriptures.

Compared with traditional religions, NRMs appear to receive much more commitment from their followers, and this is true of Kofuku-no-Kagaku where, from my participant observation, it was clear that members tended to be engaged in the Movements activities for many hours at a time. I have been told that this huge time



commitment from the members has become less extreme compared to a few years ago. In particular, in the period between 1990 and about 1993 (1991 to around 1996 in London), staff and active members often remained at their centre until late into the evening, until around 11pm or even 12am, studying the teachings, discussing their activities, or doing administrative work. I have met a number of active members who go to their local centre and spend a few hours there almost every day. These extremely eager, core members, say that there are tasks for them to do as long as they are there.

Many centres usually consist of an area that is split into office space and ‘sacred’ space, sometimes divided simply by a piece of cloth. Some also have a separate children’s play area where children can make a lot of noise, and this is usually supervised by a voluntary member. The main altar is placed in the ‘religious area’ of the centre, and this is where the various religious practices are held. The main altar is referred to as the ‘gohonzon’, although this actually has two different meanings, as discussed in Chapter IV, (Footnote 52). There are several different designs of gohonzon and many of the active members in the Movement have at least one of these at home, and say prayers, or practise self-reflection and meditation in front of it. The gohonzon used at home, sometimes referred to as the ‘family gohonzon’ carries an image of Okawa as El Cantare. The early model carried the name of ‘El Cantare’ as the ‘Grand Tathāgata Shakyamuni’ (*Shaka Dai Nyorai*), as well as a list of the key concepts of the Movement of love, knowledge, self-reflection, and development and the Movement’s name. These three, El Cantare, the key concepts and the name of Kofuku-no-Kagaku, signify the Three Jewels, namely the Buddha, the Dharma (the teachings) and the Sangha (the community).

Sunday is usually the busiest day of the week at a branch office, as it is usually the most convenient for members to attend – the day itself is not symbolic as it is in Christian practice, for example. A typical timetable for a Sunday would begin with recitation from the main prayer books, followed by a meditation session or self-reflection session, a lecture either given by the branch manager, a guest speaker or a video lecture given by Okawa. There is then time for study sessions, group discussions on the content of the monthly journals, as well as time for the members to share their experiences in their ‘everyday practice’, including any problems or revelations they have been through. The support and companionship that these meetings provide is clearly very important to the members as, in the questionnaire, nearly 10 per cent mentioned the importance of what they call their ‘dharma friends’ (*hō-yū* 法友), that is fellow members, and how sharing the same values contributed to their happiness.



The practice of meditation and self-reflection can be done at home or in the branch office, and is also a very important part of any time spent at the Movement's temples. Attendees either sit on chairs or on the floor on cushions, wherever they feel most comfortable. Communal practice is usually led by a Kofuku-no-Kagaku priest, and music is used to engender a calm atmosphere that is conducive to relaxation. A good example of a led meditation is a journey to meet a person's guardian spirit. This begins with slow breathing exercises, and then imagery that leads a person away from the phenomenal world towards the Real World, perhaps with the images of travelling higher and higher through the multi-dimensional universe. The participants are guided towards a very pure angel-like being, and are encouraged to communicate with this being. Many find these sessions incredibly emotional, and have very powerful realisations. After the session members are often asked to recount any particular revelation they have received. An example of a self-reflection session is the 'lifetime self-reflection' (*shōgai hansei* 生涯反省), again usually led by a priest. Participants begin by imagining the day they were born, and various key moments throughout the whole of their lives, looking at their experiences in as much detail as possible, and reflecting in particular on the love they have received from their parents, siblings, close friends and also all the things that life has provided for them over the years. This reflective perspective gives the participants a chance to see where they have perhaps been making repeated mistakes in relationships, how they have rarely expressed gratitude for all they have received, for instance, or how much they have been loved and how little they have realised it. The self-reflection is designed to make the members 'see things as they really are' and with a clarity that will help them transform the way they live their lives, for example, transforming bitterness and frustration into appreciation and love.

In relation to major events, the two biggest and probably most important events held by the Movement are '*The Birthday Festival*' and '*The El Cantare Festival*' which take place in July and December respectively. Since 1991, when the Movement first held these festivals in Tokyo Dome, these events have been held to celebrate and appreciate Okawa's birth, that is, the Lord El Cantare's descent from the ninth dimension to this world. Both are discussed in detail in Chapter III (p.53-4).

Another major event within the Movement is '*The New Year Festival*', which consists of a number of prayer sessions, and is used in particular to express one's gratitude to El Cantare, as well as to make resolutions for the coming year in front of the gohonzon. Other prayer sessions include the important '*Prayer Festival for Healing*



*and Health*'. The participants attend this prayer session not only for their own healing, but for the healing of others, too. 'Ancestor Veneration Festivals' are held twice a year, usually in March and August, in order to venerate, comfort and console the members' ancestors' souls.<sup>25</sup> 'The Great Enlightenment Festival' (*Taigo-sai*: 大悟祭) is a ritual, held every March, to celebrate Okawa's Enlightenment, which he is believed to have attained on 23rd March 1981. 'The May Seminar' lasts for a whole day, and has been held since 1987. In the seminar, participants attend such things as lectures, discussions, and meditation practices. 'The Great Hermes Festival' is a prayer ritual held in May. Hermes is considered to be a god in Kofuku-no-Kagaku, and as discussed above, is believed to have been one of Okawa's past incarnations. Hermes is believed to be the god of love, prosperity, development and success, and is normally referred to as *Hermes-shin* ヘルメス神, 'The God Hermes', in the Movement.

There are also prayers directed at specific outcomes such as 'The Prayer Session for Family Utopia' and 'The Prayer Festival for the Prevention of Cataclysmic Events' (*Tempenchii Chōfuku-kigan-taisai*: 天変地異調伏祈願大祭). This is a prayer rite used to purify the area around a branch office, to spread the light of Lord El Cantare to the world, and to cultivate the future. There are also 'Prayers to achieve success in the world'; such prayers relate to economic prosperity, traffic safety and academic achievement at school, for example. As discussed above, these ends, when pursued properly, are encouraged by the Movement, but if they are pursued solely for utilitarian, selfish purposes, the Movement regards this as evil, as they do not represent 'real' happiness but egotism. During my research into the Movement's doctrine, a few more points have come to light regarding 'this worldly benefit' or *genze riyaku*. According to the Movement, the act of prayer, usually referred to as *kigan* 祈願, does not constitute an act of dependence on an outside power; carried out under the proper guidance of a priest, it is understood to promote the support and guidance of higher spirits in the Heavenly World. However, the participants of these rituals can only wish for their own success in order to make other people happy and contribute to the creation of the Utopia on earth. Therefore, whenever they focus on their objectives through prayer, members have to keep the Three Jewels uppermost in their minds.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> 'Ancestor worship' is probably one of the most important religious practices in Japanese religions, whether new or old. Kofuku-no-Kagaku started this ritual in 1992. Okawa mentioned in his first 'Birthday Festival' in 1991 that members were responsible for saving people on earth as well as the restless souls in Hell (see: Okawa, 1994a: 40).

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Mr Taku Igata, Branch Manager, IRHH Europe, London, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2001.



## 5.5 Conclusion

I discussed in the introduction to this chapter that one of the fundamental teachings in Kofuku-no-Kagaku is called the 'Quest for the Right Mind', pursued through the practice of the Movement's unique 'Fourfold Path' or 'Principles of Happiness' of 'love', 'knowledge', 'self-reflection' and 'development'. A consideration of the main beliefs and practices of Kofuku-no-Kagaku in this chapter has revealed just how central this idea is. In the cosmology of the Movement, the detailed descriptions of the structure of the Real World serve as a powerful illustration of the place where the 'Quest for the Right Mind' comes to fruition, either in terms of the heavenly dimensions if the Quest has been pursued, and starkly, in terms of Hell if it has not. The heavenly dimensions also appear to illustrate very tangible levels of development, to which those on the Quest can aspire.

The main function of the cosmology, as well as the unique historical framework that overlays it, is designed to make people realise that they are part of an evolutionary process - controlled by the law of cause and effect - that encourages them to cultivate happiness, and also to extend that happiness into society in order to create the Buddha-land Utopia, that is the salvific mission of Kofuku-no-Kagaku.

A consideration of the Movement's ideas about happiness again illustrates a concentration on the Quest for the Right Mind. That Right Mind is measured in terms of the achievement of happiness, and significantly happiness is also equated with enlightenment. Again, this links closely with the Movement's ideas about the Utopia, as an individual's happiness is seen as a small utopia which, when multiplied, creates the Utopia across society as a whole. The Movement not only equates happiness with enlightenment, it also equates enlightenment with love, and by doing so, aims to merge ideas from Oriental and Occidental civilisations. This idea of bringing these two civilisations together is also believed by the Movement to be symbolised by Japan itself, for it is understood to be where East and West have integrated successfully, and this special role is used to explain why Okawa, in his identity as El Cantare, has chosen Japan as the place to lead his salvific mission.

Before Kofuku-no-Kagaku's shift in emphasis concerning the Apocalypse, which began in 1994 and became explicit in 1996, it is important to note that self-transformation was not only understood to be essential for the creation of the Utopia, but it was also necessary in order to avert the Apocalypse. This is because the Movement understood the world to be full of people who cultivated negative thoughts, and these were believed to attract the energies of hell such that disasters were almost



certain to occur. As the Movement shifted emphasis away from the Apocalypse and towards hope for a positive future, the Utopia, synonymous with the achievement of happiness in each individual, became the principal reason for its followers to pursue the 'Quest for the Right Mind'.

Fundamentally, all the beliefs and practices of the Movement come down to a quest for self-transformation, through mind training, that allows members to see the world through very different eyes, and thus to achieve happiness. In the following two chapters, I shall now discuss the data I have collected in my fieldwork on members of Kofuku-no-Kagaku.



## VI. Membership and Social Composition

### 6.1 Contents of Chapter

In the last chapter, I discussed the beliefs and practices of Kofuku-no-Kagaku. I shall now go on to address the social composition of the Movement, using data compiled in the field from my participant observation, questionnaires and in-depth interviews, as well as information given to me by the Movement itself. I will refer to those members that I interviewed with the label 'IRH' and a number in order to maintain confidentiality.

With the information collected from my questionnaires and interviews I shall discuss the demographic data of the Movement, to address such questions as members' age and occupation. I shall also highlight and discuss data related specifically to ideas about the Millennium in Kofuku-no-Kagaku where relevant. I shall do this in order to find out, for example, whether they play any specific role in the attraction of the Movement. I shall also discuss this data in detail in Chapter VII, 'Kofuku-no-Kagaku and the Millennium'.

Before I look at the social composition of the Movement, however, I shall consider other information concerning its membership, both within Japan and overseas.

### 6.2 Membership

Kofuku-no-Kagaku's membership system is somewhat complex, as the rules governing membership have changed a number of times since its establishment. Each time the rules have changed the 'entry gate' has been widened, and by and large, it has become easier to join. This is because when Okawa first set up his Movement he strictly limited the size of the membership by assigning an entrance exam for all joiners, just like a college. Okawa limited his Movement like this for its first three years, and explains that it allowed him time to concentrate on writing and running the Movement (Okawa, 1993a: 275), and thus consolidate it before it grew too large. At this time members paid an entry fee of 2,000 Yen (about £10) on acceptance of their application, and a monthly membership fee of 1,200 Yen (about £6), which included the cost of the monthly journal. All those who wished to join had to read at least ten pieces of the Movement's literature, and complete an application form, which included such questions as their final education and previous religious affiliation. They were also required to submit a short essay, which was examined by Okawa himself. In the essay, applicants had to explain why they wanted to join, and what they wanted to do within the Movement if their application was successful. This emphasis on study meant that many of the



members who joined during this period are said to have been from the ‘educated classes’, and this has determined the image of the Movement as a whole (Nijū-isseiki, 1991: 48). Only those who passed the examination were allowed to become members and study in the Movement, while those who were not considered to be good enough were told to wait for three to six months for the next application period, while others failed entirely. Some observers have commented that this ‘narrow gate’ (ibid., 48) was one of the attractions of the Movement at this time (ibid., 73).

In April 1989 the first change in the membership system occurred, and two types of membership were introduced, namely full membership and a new ‘friendship membership’. Full membership or *sei-kaiin* 正会員 still required the reading of ten books as the minimum requirement for entry as well as the submission of an essay, and included making the pledge of the ‘Quest for the Right Mind’. Friendship membership, or *shiyū kaiin* 誌友会員, on the other hand, was for sympathisers of the Movement who subscribed to its monthly journal, ‘Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly’. It had its limitations, however, as, for example, certain seminars were exclusively for full members. This change closely preceded its new missionary activities that began in 1990.

In 1990 a new way to apply for membership was added, namely ‘Admission by Recommendation (of a full member)’ *Sei-kaiin suisen-nyūkai seido* 正会員推薦入会制度, (ibid., 88). This bypassed the required reading list and essay application, but still led to full membership through the reference of someone who was already a full member. It also became possible to apply for membership while attending one of Okawa’s public lectures, which meant that the application would, again, bypass the usual procedure (ibid., 88). These changes coincided with the Movement’s ‘Sunrise 90’ missionary project; this referred to the Movement’s declaration to spread both its name and the Truth all over Japan, like the rising sun. With the new, more relaxed admission rules, the number of members mushroomed. While in July 1991, Kofuku-no-Kagaku declared a total membership of over 1.5 million (detailed as 200,000 full members, and 1.33 million friendship members), by the end of the same year it went on to declare a total membership of 5.6 million worldwide. This was the Movement’s fifth year.

After July 1991, the entry fee of 2,000 Yen was removed and the monthly membership fee was reduced to 1,000 Yen (approximately £5), for which payment by direct debit was recommended.<sup>1</sup> In the mid 1990s, the membership fee system was abolished and there is now no financial obligation involved in becoming a member, but

---

<sup>1</sup> For more details on the payment of membership fees by direct debit, see: ‘Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly’, No.55 9/1991: 114-7.



small donations are required if members wish to subscribe to any of the Movement's journals and receive the three main prayer books, including the fundamental sūtra 'The Dharma of the Right Mind'.

The term used to refer to a 'member' also changed. Initially, this was *kaiin* 会員, which can be translated as 'member', but from 1994 the Movement also started to use the term *shinja* 信者 which is best translated as 'believer'. Today, in order to become an official, registered member of Kofuku-no-Kagaku, an applicant is required to fill in an application form, and while they still have to be accepted by the Movement, the acceptance rules are more relaxed and no essay is required. According to 'Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly' (5/2001: 56), anyone can become a member now, as long as they are keen to study the Buddha's Truth or *Buppō Shinri* 仏法真理 and to pursue the 'Quest for the Right Mind'. It is also strongly recommended that new members undergo a ritual called the 'Pledge of Devotion to the Three Jewels'<sup>2</sup>, which symbolises the starting point of 'right faith', discussed in Chapter V, (p.128). A member who has made this pledge is regarded as *sanki-sha* 三歸者 ('one who has pledged to devote to the Three Jewels') and this is when they receive 'The Dharma of the Right Mind' or *Bussetsu: Shōshin Hōgo* 仏説 正心法語 and two other prayer books, called *Kigan-mon* I and II 祈願文 I and II.

Those who are affiliated with the Movement are now classified into seven different types<sup>3</sup>, discussed below (p.144). According to this classification, for example, those who attend the Movement's lecture sessions, or those who believe in Okawa's teachings as a result of reading his literature, are considered to be believers, whether they are officially registered as members (either full or friendship) or not. Kofuku-no-Kagaku introduced this wider category of 'believer', because it considered its original definition of membership to be inadequate, as it did not take into account those who read Okawa's books and believed in his teachings, and came to the Movement's lectures but did not want to register as a member by filling in an application form, for example. Originally, those whose membership fee had lapsed also fell into this category, but this is no longer the case as the membership fee has been abolished. Understood in relation to the above categories of both registered member and believer, Kofuku-no-Kagaku declared a membership or 'believership' of 10 million in January 1995. In February 1998 (the twelfth year of the Movement) the membership figure that I was given by Kofuku-no-Kagaku's International Division remained the same. This figure included

---

<sup>2</sup> 'The Three Jewels' are the Buddha, The Dharma (the teachings), and the Sangha (the community).

<sup>3</sup> I was told this by Mr Rocky Uchimura, European Branch Manager, London (1998-9), May 1998.



40,000 in the United States, 20,000 in Brazil, around 6,000 in Korea and 10,000 in Europe. These figures have not been updated since 1998 (see Table 1 below for references).

Table 1 below details the increase in membership<sup>4</sup>, from October 1986 to February 1998.

**Table 1. Increase in the membership of Kofuku-no-Kagaku**

Year and month	Number of members	Additional information	Sources*
1986, October	0 – 4	Kofuku-no-Kagaku established	21: 10
1986, December	c.100		21: 50
1987, December	1,700		21: 67
1988, December	c.4,000	Includes 5 teachers (members of staff)	21: 69, 3: 87
1989, April		Friendship member begins	21: 73
1990, January	10,000		10: 43
1990, April	17,000	Full members 9,132, friendship members 7,877	3: 91
1990, May	30,000		10: 43
1990, July	77,000	‘Recommendation’ system begins	10: 43
1991, January	170,000	Total membership	21: 93
1991, July	1,527,278	Full members 200,000 (includes c.300 staff)	S: 1, I: 210, A: 348
1991, December	5,600,000		10: 51, 111
1994, April	8,250,000		M: 32
1994, December	9,000,000	Concept of ‘believer’ introduced	10: 64
1995, July	10,000,000		10: 68
1996	10,000,000	Includes 3,200 teachers	I: 210
1998, February	10,000,000		ID

\* Sources: 21 = *21-seiki Bunmei Kenkyu-kai ed.*, 1991; 3 = *Kofuku-no-Kagaku's 3-Year Anniversary Book 1989*; 10 = *10-Year Anniversary Book 1996*; S = *Shimazono*, 1992; M = *Monthly Journal*, June 1994; A = *Astley* 1995; I = *Inoue ed.*, 1997; ID = *Kofuku-no-Kagaku International Division*, February 1998

### 6.3 Second Generation Members

Barker points out that ‘movements that consist predominantly of first generation members have tended to be far more enthusiastic than mainstream religious traditions, which are likely to have become more ‘institutionalised’ over time’ (Barker, 1995: 11).

<sup>4</sup> I shall use the term ‘membership’ and ‘member’ to refer to both ‘registered members’ and ‘believers’, unless otherwise stated.



In the case of Kofuku-no-Kagaku, it is still relatively new which means that most, if not all, members are first generation who, by and large, must have made a conscious decision to join the Movement.

During my research I met a number of young children who were considered to be members because of their parents' affiliation to Kofuku-no-Kagaku. The oldest of the adolescent members that I met was around fifteen years of age. However, these members are not exactly second-generation members as when they were born either their parents were not yet members, or they had been recruited by their parents. In relation to what I would consider 'real' second-generation members, those I have encountered are still very young, from toddlers who can only manage a few sentences to young children no older than ten.

Since May 2001 it has been possible for a child of six (the first year of primary school in Japan) to take the 'Pledge of Devotion to the Three Jewels'. The reason given for this change was to allow more people contact with the Movement. Younger children, from 0 to 5 years old can now undergo a 'Pre-Three Jewels' ritual which translates as the 'Baptism of Pre-Devotion to the Three Jewels' or *Sanki-seigan yobi senrei-shiki* 三帰誓願予備洗礼式, after which they are called 'angel members' エンゼルメンバー.<sup>5</sup> Those who are under eighteen all need their parents' or guardians' endorsement to undertake the Pledge of Devotion to the Three Jewels.

#### 6.4 Membership Overseas

As discussed in Chapter IV, Kofuku-no-Kagaku's activities expanded rapidly overseas as well as at home. The most significant expansion occurred during the three-year phase that the Movement called the 'Big-Bang Project', which lasted from the beginning of 1994 to the end of 1996 and was specifically designed to put emphasis on its international missionary work. The Movement opened its first overseas branch office in New York, which was called Kofuku-no-Kagaku USA.

As of May 2001, there are three further branch offices in the United States, in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Hawaii; the New York Branch is now a head office. The Movement opened other international branch offices, namely in Canada (Toronto), Brazil (São Paulo), Korea (Seoul), Australia (Melbourne) and the UK (London), which is the Headquarters of Kofuku-no-Kagaku in Europe. There are also many locations around the world where there are smaller, local liaison offices; they do not have official branch office status, but serve small groups who wish to hold private meetings and

---

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Mr Taku Igata, European Branch Manager (London, 1999-2001), 7th July 2001.



study sessions, sometimes with the help of a visiting branch manager. By the end of 2000, three branches around the world, namely 'Kofuku-no-Kagaku USA', 'Ciência da Felicidade do Brasil' and 'IRHH Europe'<sup>6</sup> based in the UK, had obtained legal status as religious bodies.

The features of membership across the world appear to be unique to each country. While the majority of members in locations such as Germany and London are Japanese nationals, in countries such as South Korea there are no Japanese members at all. Brazil has its own unique situation as it has a large population of Japanese nationals and Brazilians of Japanese origin; for this reason a number of Japanese NRMs have been active and extremely successful in localising there, initially recruiting only migrants but later recruiting both local people and the Japanese.<sup>7</sup> NRMs in Brazil include Perfect Liberty Kyōdan, Seichō-no-Ie and Sekai Kyūseikyō. Clarke has discussed the success of NRMs in Brazil, and looked at the incredible growth of Messianity in particular, which achieved very dramatic increases in membership from a few thousand in the 1960s, largely made up of the Japanese migrant population, to over three hundred thousand, largely made up of non-Japanese (Clarke, 2000: 161). The proportions of Kofuku-no-Kagaku members in Brazil are reported to be about fifty percent native Brazilians and fifty percent Japanese Brazilians, both direct immigrants and their descendants.<sup>8</sup> Mr Yuki Oikawa, Head of the International Division (Tokyo) revealed that the large number of non-Japanese members means that Kofuku-no-Kagaku in Brazil initially looked to him 'almost like a uniquely different religion'.<sup>9</sup> This was, he explained, because the local members had created a more liberal atmosphere than in other Kofuku-no-Kagaku centres, and the members do not seem bound by the rules and customs of the Movement as they are elsewhere. It appears that Kofuku-no-Kagaku's 'Japaneseness', still a strong feature in its other international offices, is not present in Brazil, and many members also still claim to be Catholic.

The observation about the lack of Japaneseness of Kofuku-no-Kagaku in Brazil accords closely with Clarke's observations concerning NRMs in Brazil. Messianity's success in Brazil is not matched in locations such as America, Europe and Australia (ibid., 161). The reasons Clarke cites for Messianity's success in Brazil relate to the

---

<sup>6</sup> IRHH Europe was awarded charitable status by the Charitable Commission in England and Wales on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2000 (Registration Number 1081158). Its declared objectives are: (1) to advance the education of the public in the principles and practices of Buddhism; and (2) to relieve poverty and persons in need in accordance with Buddhist principles.

<sup>7</sup> See: Clarke, 2000: 159.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Mr Yuki Oikawa, Tokyo, 22nd December 1998.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.



context of the Japanese immigrants. These immigrants initially saw themselves as ‘*kimin*’ or unwanted people’ (ibid., 160) when they arrived in Brazil, and as such were unwilling to let go of their Japanese identity. All this changed, however, after the Second World War when they felt that Japan had abandoned them, and in turn came to accept Brazil as their permanent home (ibid., 160). After this, they became more Brazilian and embraced a more easy going way of life. Messianity, along with other NRMs, realised that if they were going to communicate with this unique community they were also going to have to become less Japanese, and ‘adapt their teachings and practices and introduce Portuguese as the main language of communication and religious discourse’ (ibid., 160). Clarke explains that Messianity’s adaptation or what he calls the ‘effectiveness of its policy of inculturation’ (ibid: 161) was not just successful amongst the Japanese immigrants, but, crucially for its wider appeal, was successful amongst the native Brazilians as well. This strategy was further helped by a context of rapid social change: ‘This strategy would also enable them to reach out to the wider society which since the 1940s had been undergoing a process of rapid industrialization and urbanization’ (ibid., 160).

Clarke’s observations concerning the Brazilian case, where NRMs have undergone a ‘metamorphosis’ in order to adapt to their non-Japanese audience, would appear to be extremely relevant to the potential success of Kofuku-no-Kagaku abroad in the future. The Movement seems to be aware of this situation and to appreciate the challenges it faces abroad; in the International Division of Kofuku-no-Kagaku’s Headquarters in Tokyo, there are a number of non-Japanese nationals who have been invited to work as full-time members of staff. They have the opportunity to study Japanese and the teachings of the Movement, as well as work for the International Division. Perhaps it is the roles of these individuals, as their influence is brought to bear on the enculturation of Kofuku-no-Kagaku abroad, that will be key to the future localisation of the Movement as it seeks to expand and become accepted abroad.

I had a chance to meet and talk to some of the non-Japanese members of staff, along with other active non-Japanese members, on my various visits to the Tokyo Headquarters. I met members from South Korea, Finland, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Brazil and Britain. Most of them were in their 30s. Some of them are now back in their own countries, leading activities in their local branch offices. On the whole, those I interviewed did not seem to mind the sometimes rather strong Japanese nature of the Movement. Whether they were Brazilians, British, or New Zealanders,



this impression was basically consistent. One female European member, in her early thirties did express some reservations however:

‘If I take friends along to a meditation session, I become more aware of the ‘Japaneseness’ of the Movement. As a member, and perhaps because of my previous interest in Buddhism, I don’t find it a distraction, but I think it might be a problem for some.’ (IRH15)

At the moment, Brazil and South Korea provide successful examples of Kofuku-no-Kagaku’s attempts at localisation, as they have managed to involve many local people in their activities, and these local members are now beginning to lead activities in their own areas.

I shall now look at how membership in Kofuku-no-Kagaku is graded.

## 6.5 Grades of Membership

Membership within Kofuku-no-Kagaku is not just differentiated in relation to full and friendship members. Another category relates to members’ knowledge of the Movement’s teachings, as well as their involvement in its activities.

Even after it obtained official religious status in 1991, the Movement retained its original emphasis on study and holds examinations and seminars and sets essays, just like a college. Members study from the Movement’s books as well as special textbooks produced by the Movement that systematically explain its doctrine.<sup>10</sup> These study sessions are not compulsory, but many members take them a few times a year and on successful completion, gain qualifications. For example, the ‘Qualification Seminars’ or *Shikaku Seminar* 資格セミナー are held three times a year at elementary *Sho-kyū* 初級, intermediate *Chū-kyū* 中級 and advanced *Jō-kyū* 上級 levels; it takes a whole year to complete all three levels. Each seminar consists of a video lecture given by President Okawa, another lecture given by a branch manager (who is usually the chief priest, too), an examination paper that tests knowledge of the Movement’s doctrine, and an essay to illustrate understanding of the teachings. The qualifications are only valid for a year after they are awarded which means they must be repeated if the qualification is to be maintained. Sometimes, if a member has achieved an advanced level, this ‘re-sit’ only involves attendance of the lecture part of the first two seminars, and then one ‘good’ essay at the end of the advanced seminar. I took these seminars myself to see what they were like. The first part is not difficult to answer

---

<sup>10</sup> For example, ‘*The Mind Up Series: Kofuku-no-Kagaku Beginners, Intermediate and Advanced Texts*’, all published by IRH Press in 1989 but now out of print. Each volume costs ¥2,000 (c. £10); *Hajimete-no Buppō Shinri* (An Introduction to the Buddha’s Truth), Kofuku-no-Kagaku ed., 1994.



correctly at the elementary level, as long as one reads the Movement's core publications and it is possible to refer to the books while taking the exam. In the second part, the questions ask about religious practice, such as if one recites the Movement's basic sūtra everyday or not. If the answer to such questions is 'no', no mark is awarded, and obviously, this section relies on the honesty of the members. In the third part, the essay, you are expected to demonstrate your understanding of the teachings and your commitment to the activities of Kofuku-no-Kagaku.

According to Kofuku-no-Kagaku, the significance of these seminars is that it allows members to find out what level of awakening they have achieved in their study and practice of Kofuku-no-Kagaku's teachings. According to the Representative of IRHH Europe, passing the first exam illustrates a basic knowledge of the Truth; passing the second, or intermediate exam illustrates the ability to solve personal problems by oneself; passing the advanced exam illustrates the ability to help others solve their problems.<sup>11</sup> This highlights the practical orientation of the study in the Movement. Many members spoke of this practical nature of the teachings. One 27-year-old man who used to be a Christian, a graduate who is currently working part-time and has been a member since the late 1980s, said: 'I want to let other people know how incredible knowing the highest Law is; not by knowing it with your brain, but by practising it' (IRH18). A woman in her early seventies, who has been a member for two and a half years, spoke of how: 'every time I hear the teachings I feel I can relate them to my own life in some way' (IRH1), and a 54-year-old full-time housewife and graduate, who joined Kofuku-no-Kagaku in the 1980s said:

'Simply by reading I've learnt so much, and putting it into practice the knowledge has really become my own power, nothing has explained the meaning of attaining enlightenment this much before' (IRH12).

Apart from these three seminars, the Movement also holds an examination called 'The Buddha's Truth Test' (*Zenkoku Buppō-shinri-gaku Kentei-shiken* 全国仏法真理学検定試験), held once a year in January or February, and quite a major event. A number of suggested readings are given in preparation for the test, which lasts for one hour. Unlike the examinations discussed above, however, it does not have a pass or fail result but is used by the members as a personal evaluation of their progress. If a member achieves a very high mark, as much as 98 or 100 per cent, and is a very keen participant in the Movement's activities, the test is also used to award the qualification of 'researcher' or research fellow (*kenkyū-in* 研究員). This qualification is considered to

---

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Mr Taku Igata, London, May 2001.



be the first grade of lectureship in the Movement, and is also the ultimate qualification for ordinary, lay members; it is not possible to give lectures on Kofuku-no-Kagaku's doctrine to other members without being a qualified lecturer.<sup>12</sup>

All employees of Kofuku-no-Kagaku, more commonly known as 'renouncers' (*shukke-sha*), 'monks' (*biku*) and 'nuns' (*bikuni*), have to sit the same Buddha's Truth Test as the lay members, but they also have many more essay-based examinations as well. This leads them to higher grades of lectureship, such as branch office lecturer (*shibu-kōshi*), and head office lecturer (*hombu-kōshi*). In this sense, all employees are qualified to give lectures to members and non-members alike, and the higher the lectureship they hold, the bigger the audience they can address.

There are a few more opportunities for the members to study the teachings, such as the 'May Conference' (*Go-gatsu Kenshū* 五月研修), which has been held every year since Kofuku-no-Kagaku was first established. This study session does not have any direct relationship to the members' qualifications or levels.

Many of the people I interviewed spoke of the importance of their study within the Movement. One 49-year-old female, a graduate who is now a full time housewife said: 'Because I am studying the meaning of living deeply, my worldview has now become both deep and wide' (IRH27). A 40-year-old-female, a part-time worker who has been a member since the early 1990s said:

'By reading the literature I became convinced that Master Okawa is the Saviour. I am so happy that I am studying this advanced teaching. Because of my study I no longer get stuck with one thing. I am no longer bothered by stupid things and I no longer get badly affected by things' (IRH26).

She also said:

'Out of all the activities that the Movement conducts, I find that the various retreat sessions at the temples, *Shōja*, such as meditation and self-reflection sessions, are the most powerful for me.' (Ibid)

In the questionnaire, nine members responded to the question 'when do you feel happy?' by saying that their study of the teachings in Kofuku-no-Kagaku was the most significant cause of their happiness.

As briefly mentioned above, members are categorised not just by examination achievements, but also by their attendance *att* and commitment to Kofuku-no-Kagaku's activities. Members are advised to achieve a high level in order to attain the highest state of enlightenment possible, which means that they can then contribute directly to

---

<sup>12</sup> For more details of the lectureship system, see: Kageyama, 1992: 216-8. He refers to Kofuku-no-Kagaku's levels of qualification as a 'ranking' system.



the creation of the Utopia. Kofuku-no-Kagaku also expresses this by declaring that it wants to bring down the ‘bodhisattva realm’ (*bosatsu kai* 菩薩界) on earth by creating more bodhisattvas on earth. In this sense the levels provide an indication of how the Movement and the members alike see their progress towards the creation of the Utopia. The seven levels apply to members and believers alike:

- 1 *Aidoku-sha* 愛読者, those who regularly read Kofuku-no-Kagaku’s publications;<sup>13</sup>
- 2 *Teiki kōdoku-sha* 定期購読者, those who subscribe to the Movement’s monthly journals;
- 3 *Teiki shokufuku-sha* 定期植福者, those who make monthly donations;
- 4 *Reiteki Taiken-sha* 霊的体験者, those who study the teachings of Kofuku-no-Kagaku and put them into practise in their daily lives, and have actual experience of becoming happier from their practice – this may involve both self-transformation and an improvement in their circumstances;
- 5 *Sanki-sha* 三帰者, those who have undergone the ritual of ‘The Pledge to Devote to the Three Jewels’ (*sanki-seigan shiki* 三帰誓願式), and have become members with strong commitment;
- 6 *Daikokuten Shinja* 大黒天信者, those who have achieved prosperity by practising the teachings of Kofuku-no-Kagaku and can make substantial contributions to the Movement, especially financially; and
- 7 *Netsuretsu Shinja* 熱烈信者, those who are extremely eager and enthusiastic about Kofuku-no-Kagaku’s activities in all the aspects above.

There is one final category:

- 7+ *Bosatsu Kōhosha* 菩薩候補者, those who are candidates to become future ‘bodhisattvas’.

The higher the number, the higher the level. However, unlike the clear grades achieved from seminar qualifications, there is a certain ambiguity in the levels as they are not necessarily achieved chronologically. For example, it is not clear what happens when one has achieved Level 5, by devoting oneself to the Three Jewels, but has not achieved the happiness from one’s practice that determines Level 4. I asked this question to the Representative of the European Branch Office in London, who was also a lecturer in the Movement, and he did not think that these distinctions were as clear as they should be.<sup>14</sup> After some discussion with him, I came to realise that these levels are not linear, but

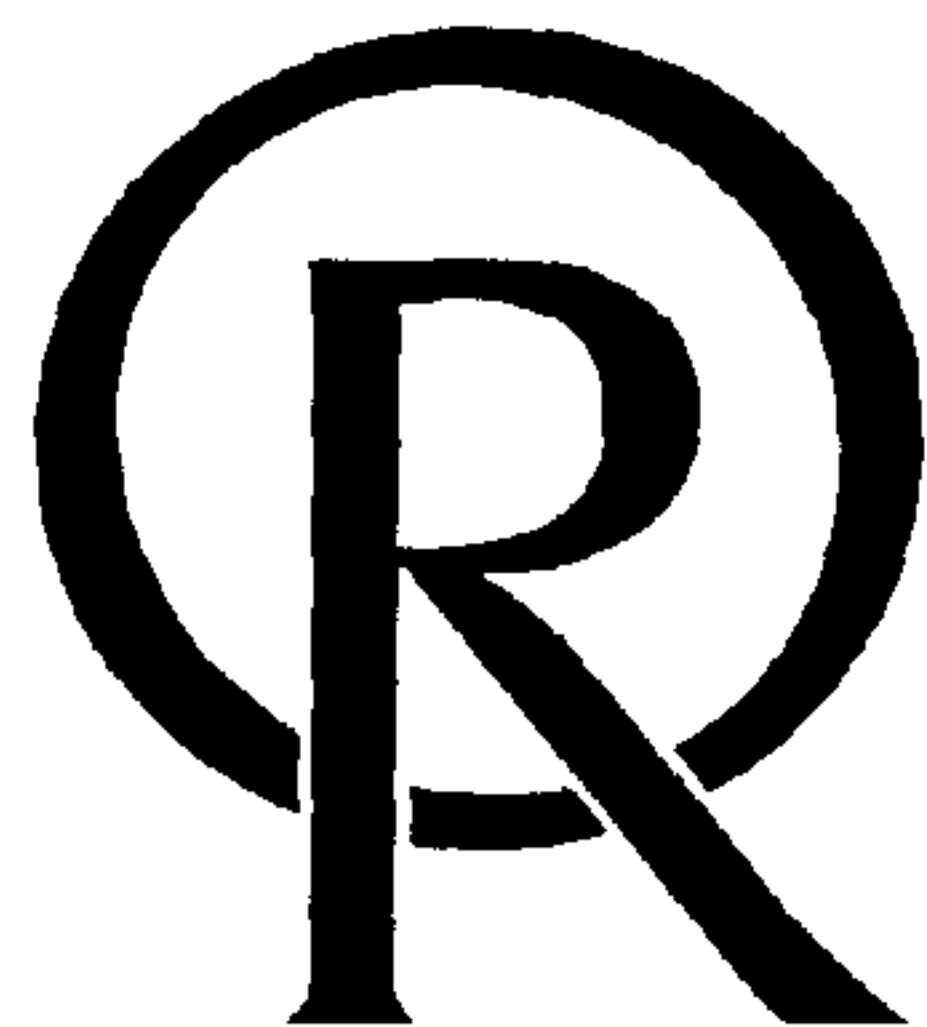
<sup>13</sup> Interview with Mr Rocky Uchimura, London, May 1998.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.



represent different standards that are set by Kofuku-no-Kagaku for the members to achieve in order to give them an incentive to improve their current status or to motivate greater commitment to the Movement's activities.

**Figure 11. The 'RO' symbol**



Many members wear a gold-coloured pendant, called a *Shōshin-hō* 正心宝 or the 'Jewel of the Right Mind', which bears a distinctive 'RO' symbol taken from the Founder, Ryuho Okawa's initials, as illustrated in Figure 11 left. This pendant is part of a set of three important items that also includes the gold covered prayer book, *Shōshin-hō-go* (The Dharma of the Right Mind) and a 'mirror' *Shōshin-kyō* 正心鏡, a small glass tablet also bearing the 'RO' symbol. These three items are bestowed on a member by their branch manager, after they have made a donation to the Movement. The items used to be called *jingi* 神器, a word of Shintō origin, which refers to three traditional, sacred items used in Shintō practice. However, circa 1994 and probably in line with the Movement's emphasis on El Cantare and Buddhism and away from its eclectic approach, this connection was removed as the three became known by the new name *hōgu* 宝具 or 'treasure items'. The 'RO' pendant not only functions to identify the wearer with the Movement, it is believed to create a strong relationship between El Cantare and the wearer, as well as protect them from various evil spirits, and the mirror is believed to have the same function. The mirror is used during religious practice, such as meditation and recitation of prayers. The 'RO' symbol is believed to have been 'given' to Kofuku-no-Kagaku in 1989 by the 'spirit' of Leonardo Da Vinci, who is understood to be one of the many guiding spirits of the Movement and, since December 1989, this symbol has been used as Kofuku-no-Kagaku's official logo.<sup>15</sup> Kofuku-no-Kagaku's Headquarters, branch offices, temples and retreat centres (see photographs in Chapter IV) and all other facilities, as well as its books, prayer books, alters and the gohonzon, all carry the 'RO' symbol. Some members also put a gold coloured 'RO' emblem on their front door.

It is rather unusual, although not the first time, that a Japanese NRM has used Roman characters in its main symbol. This has also been done by Perfect Liberty Kyōdan, with 'PL' (although not as the regular sign of the Movement, as it appears only to have been used on the outside of their buildings) and by GLA. World Mate (formerly known as 'Powerful Cosmo Mate') uses an English name, although their emblem does

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Mr Teddy Takagi, European Branch Manager, (London, 2001- ), 16<sup>th</sup> April 2002.



not have Roman letters. The use of Roman characters and/or English names amongst all these movements appears to be an attempt to engender international appeal.

In the late 1990s an award system was introduced in the Movement, which was called *Bosatsu-kenshō Seido* 菩薩顕彰制度; the ‘System for the Recognition of Bodhisattva Quality’. This award was designed to give recognition to what the Movement calls ‘bodhisattva-like believers’ or *bosatsu shinja* 菩薩信者, who make a considerable contribution to the creation of the Movement’s Buddha-land Utopia. The members who have received this award, marked by an official certificate, are not necessarily regarded as bodhisattvas as such, but their contribution to the creation of the Buddha-land can be compared to that of a bodhisattva<sup>16</sup>. There are three categories within this particular award, but the accurate translation of these special terms is not easy; they are *Dendō Bosatsu* 伝道菩薩 or ‘Missionary Bodhisattva’, *Kyōten Bosatsu* 經典菩薩 or ‘Scripture Bodhisattva’, and *Fukyō Bosatsu* 布教菩薩 or ‘Propagation Bodhisattva’. The first award is given to a member who has introduced more than three people to the Movement within a period of six months. A member who has been able to give out over 60 Kofuku-no-Kagaku publications is given the second award, and if a member has managed to give out over 600 of the Movement’s journals, they will be given the third award. These awards are not given in any particular order of merit, but are a mark of a member’s commitment, recognition of their hard work, and provide an incentive to members to keep up their activities for the Movement.<sup>17</sup>

From this analysis of the membership of the Movement, I shall now go on to look in detail at the data gathered from my questionnaire survey. I shall also include information gathered from my in-depth interviews where relevant.

## 6.6 Demographic Data and Socio-economic Background

As discussed in Chapter III, I conducted the main body of my fieldwork between 1998 and 2002. The majority of the questionnaires that I distributed were answered during the New Year Festival in 1999. The recovery of the questionnaires was extremely successful; I had 164 returns out of 210 distributed, which makes a 78.1 per cent success rate. The high percentage was largely due to the generous assistance of branch managers and priests at the offices involved, as well as each member’s kind understanding of my research.

---

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Mr Rocky Uchimura, London, May 1998.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Mr Teddy Takagi, London, 16<sup>th</sup> April 2002.



I shall begin my discussion of the demographic data of the Movement with a look at the gender split of the respondents and then their age.

### *Gender, Age and Marital Status*

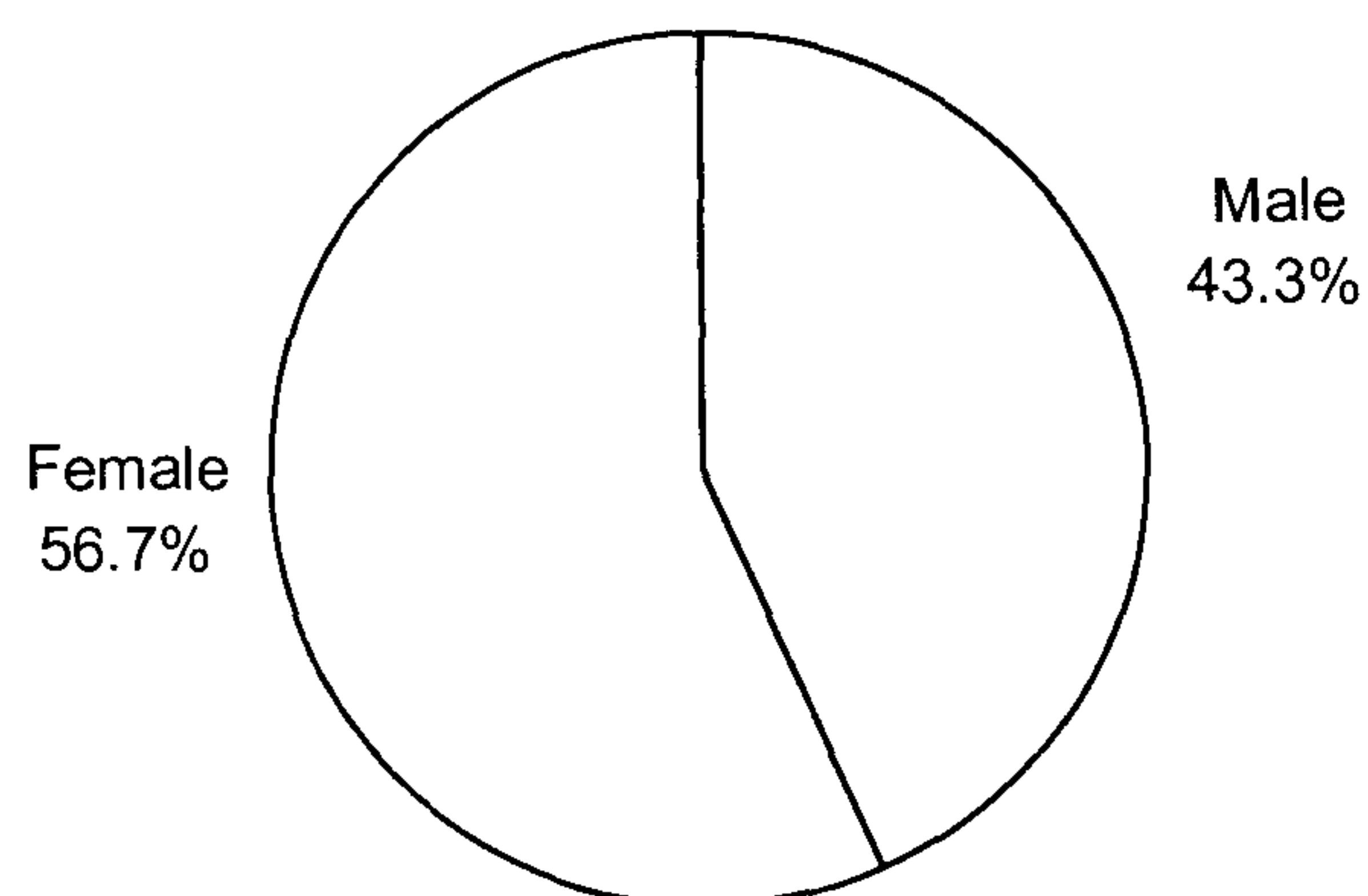
As many researchers of new religions point out, it is usual to find more female than male participants. The results of my research show this to be the case in Kofuku-no-Kagaku, but the proportion also shows that the female majority is not disproportionate.

**Table 2. Gender distribution of members**

Male	71	(43.3)
Female	93	(56.7)
TOTAL	164	(100.0)

*Note: Percentages given in brackets*

**Chart 2a. Pie chart illustrating gender distribution**



In relation to the age of the members, the results below show that three specific age groups, namely those between 30-34, 35-39 and 40-44 years, make up approximately half the entire membership (49.5%). Of these three groups, it is the one between 40 and 44 that makes up the highest percentage of the membership (17.1%). If the age group is changed slightly to one between 38 and 43, then this makes up nearly a quarter of the whole membership. In the 1960s and 1970s, those who joined NRMs were said to be disproportionately young. In the case of Kofuku-no-Kagaku, however, which began in 1986, this is not the case; those in the younger age groups, especially in their 20s, make up only 15.2 per cent. This is significantly smaller than I had initially expected. By contrast, in Aum Shinrikyō in 1995, 47.5 per cent were in their 20s, while those in their 20s and 30s made up three-quarters of the entire membership at 75.4 per cent (Shimazono, 1995: 5-6). Figures for Kofuku-no-Kagaku around 1995 provide the same contrast with Aum, as the average age of full members was given as 39.2, and the



figure including friendship members takes this to an average age of over 40 (Kofuku-no-Kagaku Commemorative Book on its Third Anniversary: 91).

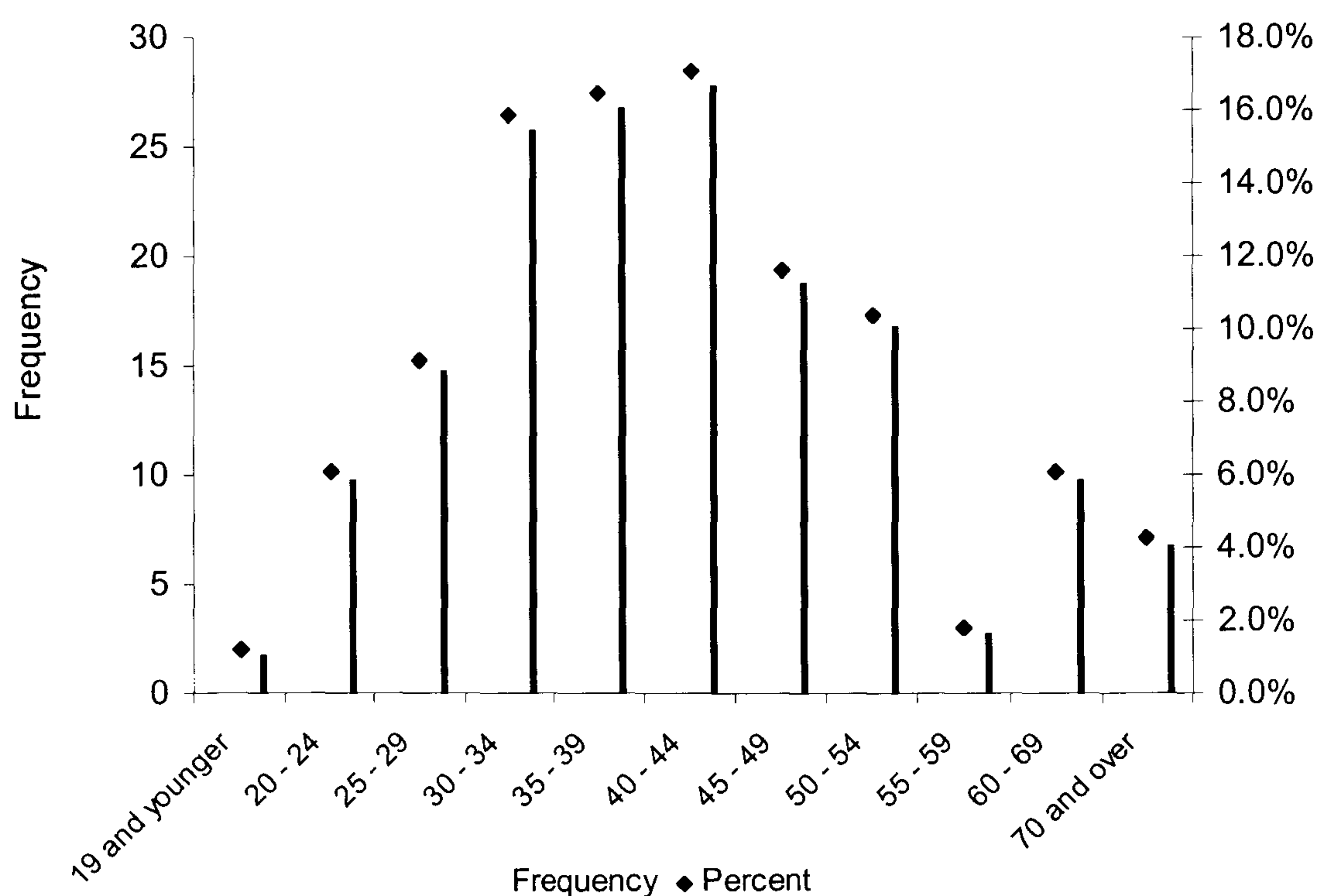
**Table 3. Age distribution**

19 and younger	2	(1.2)
20 - 24	10	(6.1)
25 - 29	15	(9.1)
30 - 34	26	(15.9)
35 - 39	27	(16.5)
40 - 44	28	(17.1)
45 - 49	19	(11.6)
50 - 54	17	(10.4)
55 - 59	3	(1.8)
60 - 69	10	(6.1)
70 and over	7	(4.3)
TOTAL	164	(100)

*Note: Percentages given in brackets*

The bar chart of these results, Chart 3a below, shows a ‘mountain’ shape with the age group between 40 and 44 at its peak.

**Chart 3a. Bar chart illustrating age distribution**





In comparison with the above figures, the national population in Japan in the same year shows very different results. Between the ages of 20 and 60 years the two most populated groups are those between 25 and 29 and between 50 and 54 (that is, 9.9 million people or approximately 7.8 per cent of the entire population). The two least populated groups are from 35 to 39 and from 40 to 44 (7.9 million people or approximately 6.2 per cent of the population). This means that the national population chart shows a clear 'valley' shape between the ages of 30 to 50.<sup>18</sup> By comparing these two statistics, the least populated age groups in the national figures are the most populated age groups in Kofuku-no-Kagaku within Shiga and Kyoto Prefectures. These people all belong to the 'Post Second World War' generation. Incidentally, the youngest age group that came from the Second World War period is the 55-59 group, which is the least populated group in the Movement (1.8 per cent), along with the teenagers' group (1.2 per cent), although the 55-59 group is the third most populated group in the national average (7.02%).

In relation to marital status<sup>19</sup>, the questionnaire revealed the following figures.

**Table 4. Marital status**

Married	117	(71.3)
Single	46	(28.0)
N/A	1	(0.6)
TOTAL	164	(100)

*Note: Percentages given in brackets*

I shall now look at the year the members joined, which is interesting because, in particular, it mirrors the changing recruitment attitudes of the Movement.

#### *Year of joining*

It is important to note when looking at the figures below that the majority of the questionnaires were collected in the first two months of 1999, which means that the figure for the year 1999 (0.6% ) does not reflect a complete picture.

The data gathered yielded some intriguing results.

<sup>18</sup> This survey was conducted in October 1999. For more details of the Japanese national population see: Asahi Shimbun ed., 'Japan Almanac 2001': 56.

<sup>19</sup> In research conducted in preparation for this survey, I had two additional categories for marital status, namely divorced and widowed. However, some asked me what category they should select if they were divorced and remarried, or widowed but still considered themselves to be married, for example. To avoid confusion, I therefore asked members simply to put whether they personally considered themselves to be married or single.



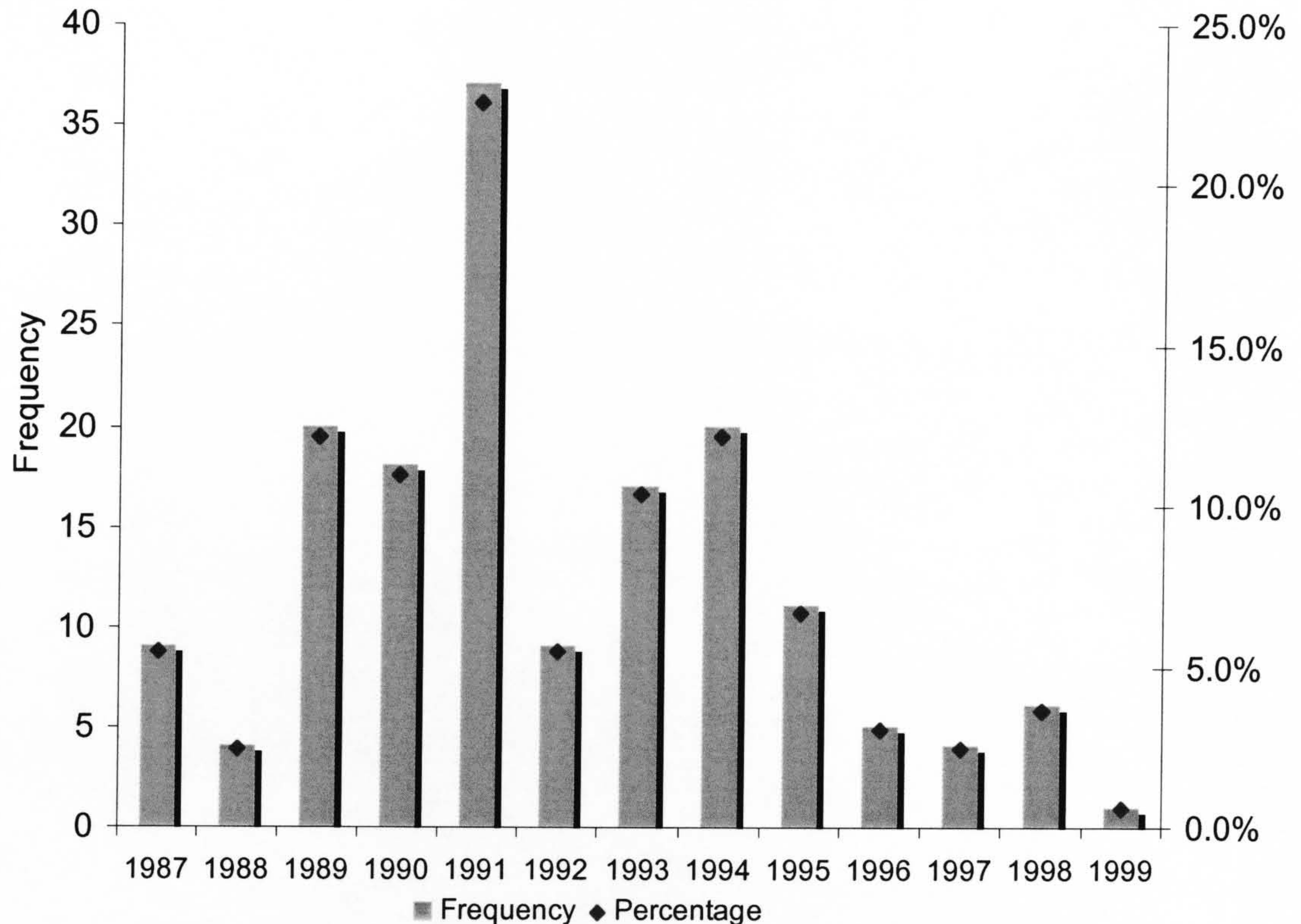
**Table 5. Year of joining**

1987	9	(5.5)
1988	4	(2.4)
1989	20	(12.2)
1990	18	(11.0)
1991	37	(22.6)
1992	9	(5.5)
1993	17	(10.4)
1994	20	(12.2)
1995	11	(6.7)
1996	5	(3.0)
1997	4	(2.4)
1998	6	(3.7)
1999	1	(0.6)
N/A	3	(1.8)
TOTAL	164	(100.0)

*Note: Percentages given in brackets*

The Movement was established in 1986, and none of the members who participated in the survey joined in that year. As discussed in the first section of this chapter, Okawa limited the size of his Movement during the first few years, and instead concentrated on educating his earliest adherents. It was not until three years later, in April 1989, that Okawa told his initial group of followers that Kofuku-no-Kagaku was ready to start spreading the teachings to the wider populace, and that they could now go out and bring new people into the Movement. This new move is clearly illustrated in the bar chart below in the sudden increase of members between 1988 and 1989.



**Chart 5a. Bar chart illustrating year of joining**

Kofuku-no-Kagaku's new spirit of missionary work was officially declared in November 1989, and this coincided with the publication of one of Okawa's important works 'The Rebirth of Buddha' or *Buddha Saitan*. This was also when Okawa officially declared his status as the reincarnation of the Buddha, and the spiritual 'relationship' that this symbolised between him and his followers. The next four years, until the end of 1993, was the first phase of the Movement to be defined in terms of missionary work. Following on from this new emphasis, 1991 was one of the most significant years of growth in the Movement when it declared that its membership had reached 1.5 million by July 1991, its fifth year. The bar chart above clearly reflects this sudden growth with 22.6 per cent of respondents joining in that year; by far the largest percentage in the chart. The percentage suddenly drops in 1992 and gradually rises again to reach a smaller peak in 1994 of 12.2 per cent. Again this is followed by another significant drop, with only a very small rise in 1998. According to these figures, the number of new members after 1996 is significantly less than previous years. This decline in new joiners may in part be a result of the fact that the majority of respondents to the questionnaire were those who attended Kofuku-no-Kagaku's 1999 New Year Festival. New members might not have been keen or ready to join such a festival, which is traditionally an important time of year in Japan. They may, instead, still prefer to respect the long held practice of *hatsu mode*, visiting more traditional religious sites



with their families, such as famous temples and shrines. The locations of the two branch offices where I distributed most of the questionnaires may have been another important factor in this attendance as Otsu City, (South Shiga Prefecture) and Kyoto City, where the survey was held, have a great number of very important religious sites, which include the temple complex collectively known as Enriyaku-ji Temple on Mount Hiei and the Head Temples of both the Pure Land School and the True Pure Land School of Buddhism. I can only speculate, but new members may still have wanted to visit these sites first, before attending events at Kofuku-no-Kagaku. In order to find this out, however, some further research will be needed.

Further analysis of the year of joining can be made in relation to gender, and these figures show some clear tendencies between the two sexes.

**Table 5b. Year of joining in relation to gender**

	Gender			
	Male		Female	
1987	3	(4.2)	6	(6.7)
1888	3	(4.2)	1	(1.1)
1989	9	(12.7)	11	(12.2)
1990	12	(16.9)	6	(6.7)
1991	19	(26.8)	18	(20.0)
1992	4	(5.6)	5	(5.6)
1993	4	(5.6)	13	(14.4)
1994	9	(12.7)	11	(12.2)
1995	3	(4.2)	8	(8.9)
1996	1	(1.4)	4	(4.4)
1997	1	(1.4)	3	(3.3)
1998	2	(2.8)	4	(4.4)
1999	1	(1.4)	-	-
TOTAL	71	(100)	90	(100)

*Note: Percentages given in brackets.*

*The above table does not include three 'not applicable' frequencies.*

The most significant year for new joiners, 1991, shows that proportionately more men joined during 1991 than women; more than one in four male members joined Kofuku-no-Kagaku in 1991 alone, compared to one in five for female members. It is also interesting to note that the figures for female joiners are more consistent than the figures for male joiners; the majority of men joined in the period between 1989 and



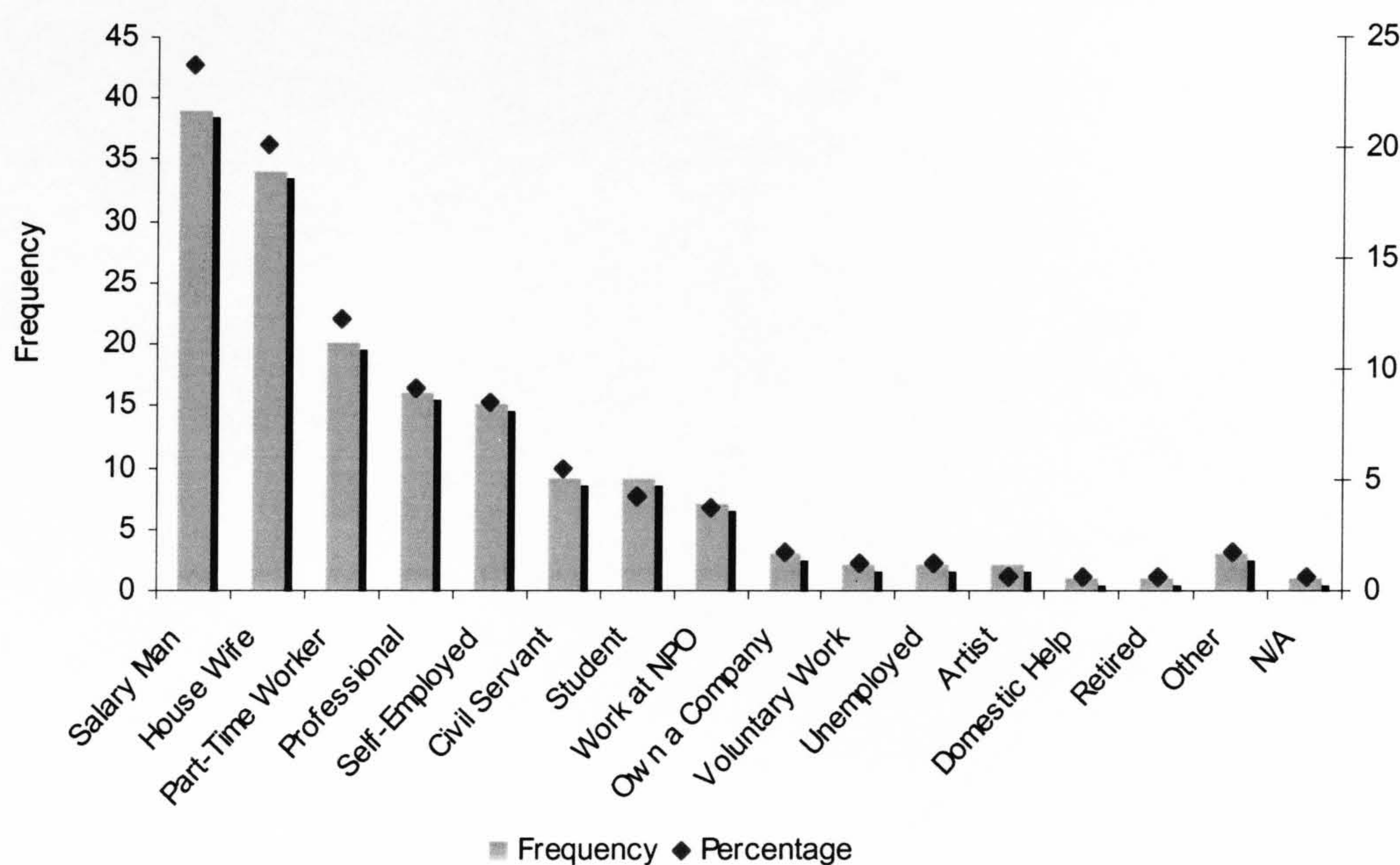
1991, and again in 1994. At other times the figures are extremely low, especially after 1995.

I shall now discuss the occupation of the members.

### *Occupation*

Apart from one person whose answer was 'Not Applicable', all the respondents answered this question. Fifteen different options were listed on the questionnaire, including 'unemployed' and 'retired'. As Chart 6 below illustrates, 'salary man' was the most common occupation amongst the members. This occupation is somewhat difficult to translate, but refers to those salaried workers in Japan who are employed in the private sector. This term can apply to women, too.

**Chart 6: Bar chart illustrating occupation**



In the gender distribution in Table 6a below, there is a very sharp divide between the sexes as 42.9 per cent of the male members are 'salary men', whereas only 9.6 per cent of the female members come into this category. This is not the only example of a clear divide between the genders, as perhaps unsurprisingly the same thing occurs in reverse with the category of 'Housewife', the second most populated occupation. Wilson and Dobbelaere's research reveals that 'Housewife' is only the fourth most common occupation in Soka Gakkai, with a mere 5 per cent of members in the UK falling within this category (Wilson & Dobbelaere, 1994: 115). The figure is, however, very different in Kofuku-no-Kagaku: <sup>in Japan</sup> 20.7 per cent of the total members are full-time housewives; all are female, and this accounts for 36.2 per cent of the female members. This figure does not include those housewives with full or part-time occupations. The second most



common category amongst the female members is ‘part-time worker’, which accounts for 19.1 per cent of females.

**Table 6a. Occupation in relation to gender and in total**

	Gender					
	Male		Female		Total	
Salary Man	30	(42.9)	9	(9.6)	39	(23.8)
Housewife	-	-	34	(36.2)	34	(20.7)
Part-Time Worker	2	(2.9)	18	(19.1)	20	(12.2)
Professional	6	(8.6)	10	(10.6)	16	(9.8)
Self-Employed	4	(5.7)	11	(11.7)	15	(9.1)
Civil Servant	9	(12.9)	-	-	9	(5.5)
Student	6	(8.6)	3	(3.2)	9	(5.5)
Work at NPO	5	(7.1)	2	(2.1)	7	(4.3)
Company Owner	3	(4.3)	-	-	3	(1.8)
Voluntary Work	1	(1.4)	1	(1.1)	2	(1.2)
Unemployed	1	(1.4)	1	(1.1)	2	(1.2)
Artist	1	(1.4)	1	(1.1)	2	(1.2)
Domestic Help	-	-	1	(1.1)	1	(0.6)
Retired	-	-	1	(1.1)	1	(0.6)
Other	1	(1.4)	2	(2.1)	3	(1.8)
N/A	1	(1.4)	-	-	1	(0.6)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>(100)</b>

*Note: Percentages given in brackets*

The category of ‘part-time worker’, like ‘salary man’, has a specific meaning in Japan, and refers to those who are doing temporary or ‘extra’ work on top of a full-time role, such as a student or mother; this appears as the third most frequent occupation amongst Kofuku-no-Kagaku members in my survey. The number of part-time and temporary workers in Japan is increasing, especially amongst the younger generations who are sometimes known as ‘freeters’.<sup>20</sup> In this survey, however, the overwhelming majority of part-time workers are female; 19 per cent female and only 3 per cent male.

<sup>20</sup> ‘Freeter’ フリーター is a new word in Japan and is an amalgamation of the English word ‘free’ with the German word ‘arbeit’ (to work); ‘free-arbeiter’ is then shortened to ‘freeter’. This term refers to those people who are not engaged in any permanent occupation and are free to take temporary work as they feel necessary. It was reported that there were over 1.5 million ‘freeters’ in Japan in 2000 (Mainichi Shimbun, 27<sup>th</sup>/28<sup>th</sup> June 2000).



This would suggest that they are housewives and mothers who are juggling the responsibilities of being a housewife with going out to work part-time.

The unemployment rate in Japan in 1999 was 4.7 per cent (Asahi Shimbun ed., 2000: 102)<sup>21</sup>, which was the highest figure in Japan since the Second World War. Amongst the members of Kofuku-no-Kagaku, however, the figure was a mere 1.2 per cent.

It is often pointed out that members of NRMs in the West are, by and large, from fairly well off, middle class backgrounds and usually have a good education, a career and a family. According to Barker, for example, most members of well known NRMs in the West, such as the Brahma Kumaris Movement, the Church of Scientology and the Unification Church 'come disproportionately from the middle or upper middle classes' (Barker, 1995: 14). The above statistics on the occupation of the members in Kofuku-no-Kagaku certainly bear witness to the fact that many come from fairly well off, middle class or equivalent backgrounds, and in order to look at this comparison from a different angle, I shall now look at the education of the members.

### *Education*

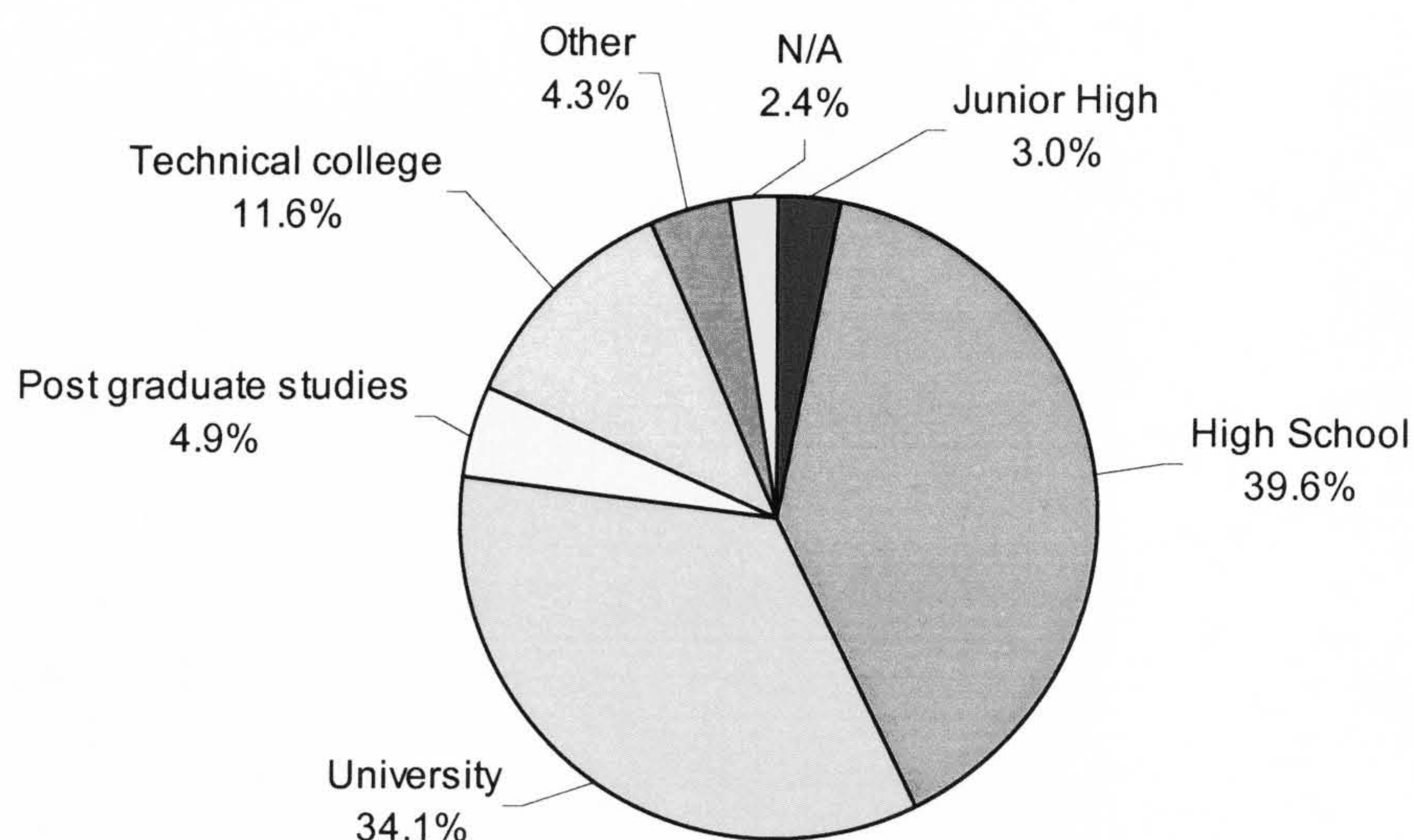
Here, I would like to analyse the background of the members in terms of their education and compare this with the national statistics.

According to the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (*Monbu-Kagaku-sho*), the ratio of students, aged between 15 and 18, who went to high-school (equivalent to secondary school in the UK) was 95.8 per cent in Japan in 1999. This compares quite closely with the figures concerning the educational background of the members, as only 3 per cent finished their education at the compulsory level of junior high-school (this figure, however, should be understood to be approximate as 2.4 per cent of the respondents did not answer this question).

---

<sup>21</sup> This figure is from the 'Labour Force Survey' (*Rōdō-ryoku Chōsa* 労働力調査) conducted by the Japanese Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications' (*Sōmu-shō* 総務省). The figure then rose to 5% in 2001, with a total of 3.4 million unemployed (Source: *Sōmu-shō*, Daily Yomiuri, 29<sup>th</sup> January 2002).



**Chart 7. Pie chart illustrating final education completed**

The Japanese Ministry figures show that the number that attended university or junior college (short-term university, called *tandai* 短大, which is usually two years in duration) was 49.1 per cent in 1999 (38.2% university, 10.9% junior college) (Asahi Shimbun ed., 2000: 248). However, in 1990 the figure was 36.3 per cent (24.6% university, and 11.7% junior college) (ibid., 248). If these figures are compared with the figures for the members of Kofuku-no-Kagaku, given in the table below, this shows that 39 per cent completed their education at university level (this figure includes postgraduate education at 4.9% and junior college).

**Table 7a. Final education completed in relation to gender and in total**

	Gender					
	Male		Female		Total	
Junior High <sup>22</sup>	3	(4.2)	2	(2.2)	5	(3.0)
High School	24	(33.8)	41	(44.1)	65	(39.6)
University	29	(40.8)	27	(29.0)	56	(34.1)
Post graduate studies	7	(9.9)	1	(1.1)	8	(4.9)
Technical college	4	(5.6)	15	(16.1)	19	(11.6)
Other	2	(2.8)	5	(5.4)	7	(4.3)
N/A	2	(2.8)	2	(2.2)	4	(2.4)
TOTAL	71	(100)	93	(100)	164	(100)

Note: Percentages given in brackets

<sup>22</sup> The academic year in Japan begins in April. Compulsory education consists of six years at primary school and three years at junior high school, which finishes at the age of 15. High school is non-compulsory and is usually three years in duration. University degree courses are usually four years, or six years for special subjects such as medical science.



Table 7a illustrates that 50.6 per cent completed their education at higher education level; this figure includes those who studied at technical college. Two things are important to note here, however. First, the national figure represents those who entered university and junior college, but does not represent those who completed that education; the national figure for education completed is, therefore, likely to be lower if this is taken into account. Second as discussed, the national average of 49 per cent is taken from 1999. As the largest age group questioned were between 30 and 44 years old, earlier education figures would give a more accurate comparison. If the figure from 1990 is taken, for example, the figure is 36.5 per cent, which is 13 per cent lower than the figure for 1999. The figure for 1970 was only 23.6 per cent (17% university and 6.5% junior college). From these lower figures it can be inferred that the average of 39 per cent (or 50.6% higher education completed) means that members of Kofuku-no-Kagaku have a significantly higher than average level of education completed. Wilson & Dobbelaere make a very interesting comment about the high level of education in Soka Gakkai UK compared with such movements as the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Exclusive Brethren, where academic education is either not encouraged or even banned (Wilson and Dobbelaere, 1994: 123). The relatively high education level in Kofuku-no-Kagaku, as well as the emphasis on study within the Movement, provides another contrast to this attitude.

I shall now go on to look at the data concerning the lives of the members of Kofuku-no-Kagaku before they joined the Movement, in relation to their religious interest. I shall begin by discussing their previous religious affiliation.

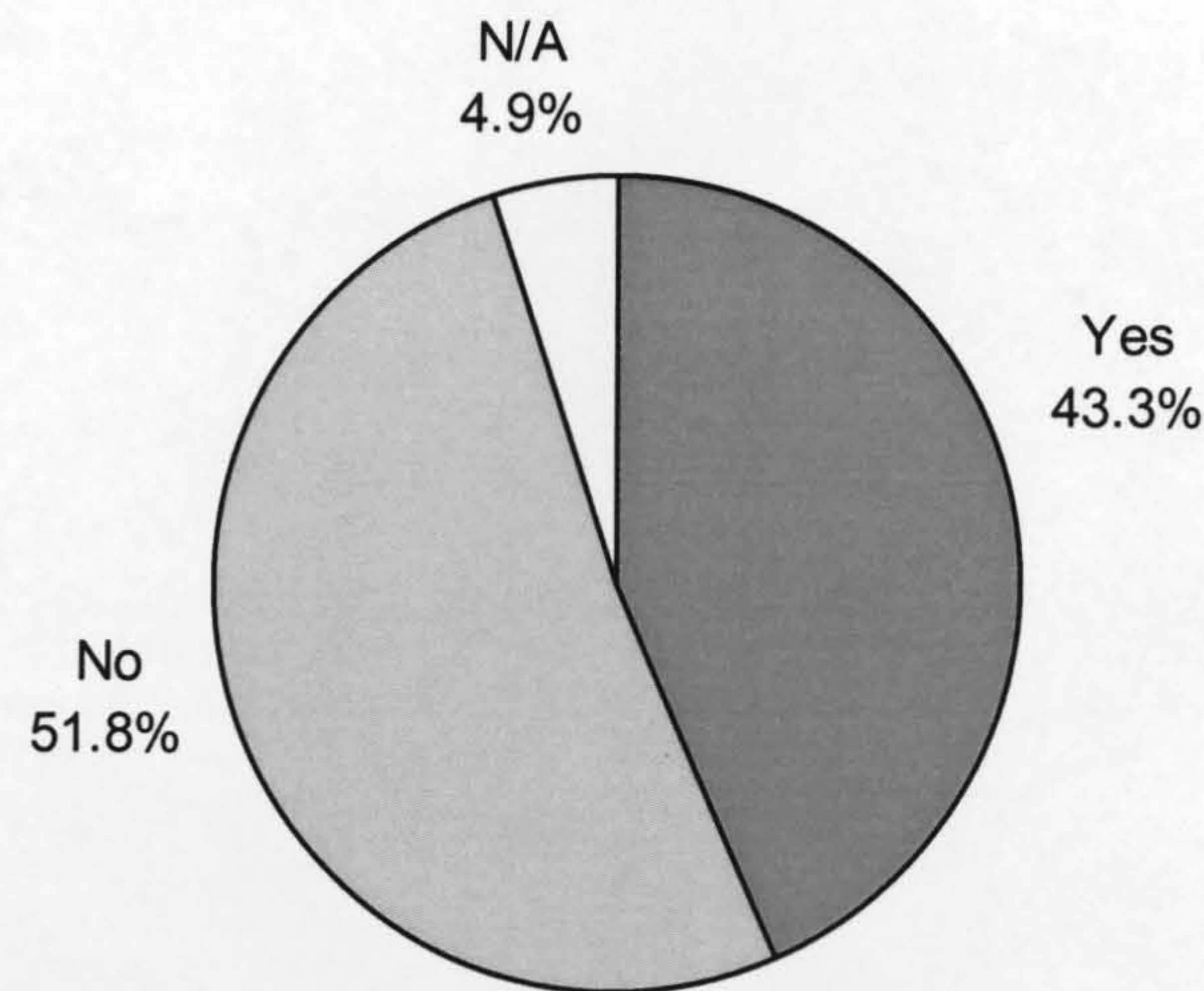
#### *Previous religious affiliation*

The chart below illustrates the respondents' religious affiliation before joining Kofuku-no-Kagaku. 71 out of the 164, or 43.3 per cent who took part in the survey had some kind of previous religious affiliation. 43.3 per cent is significantly higher than the national average in Japan who claim religious interest, which is approximately 33 per cent (NHK<sup>23</sup>, 1984: 3).

---

<sup>23</sup> NHK can be understood as the equivalent of the BBC in the UK. This survey was published under the name *Nippon-jin no Shūkyō Ishiki* 日本人の宗教意識 (or 'The Religious Consciousness of the Japanese') in 1984 and is one of the very few and perhaps most universally conducted surveys on the religious consciousness of the Japanese. It is a shame that NHK has not updated its survey since 1984, but it is still an extremely useful tool with which to understand various aspects of religiosity in Japan today.



**Chart 8. Pie chart illustrating previous religious affiliation**

In terms of gender ratio, it can be seen from the table below that there is very little difference in the figures between the sexes although the figures show slightly more women than men had a previous religious affiliation.

**Table 8a. Previous religious affiliation in relation to gender and in total**

	Gender					
	Male		Female		Total	
Yes	30	(42.3)	41	(44.1)	71	(43.3)
No	38	(53.5)	47	(50.5)	85	(51.8)
N/A	3	(4.2)	5	(5.4)	8	(4.9)
TOTAL	71	(100.0)	93	(100.0)	164	(100.0)

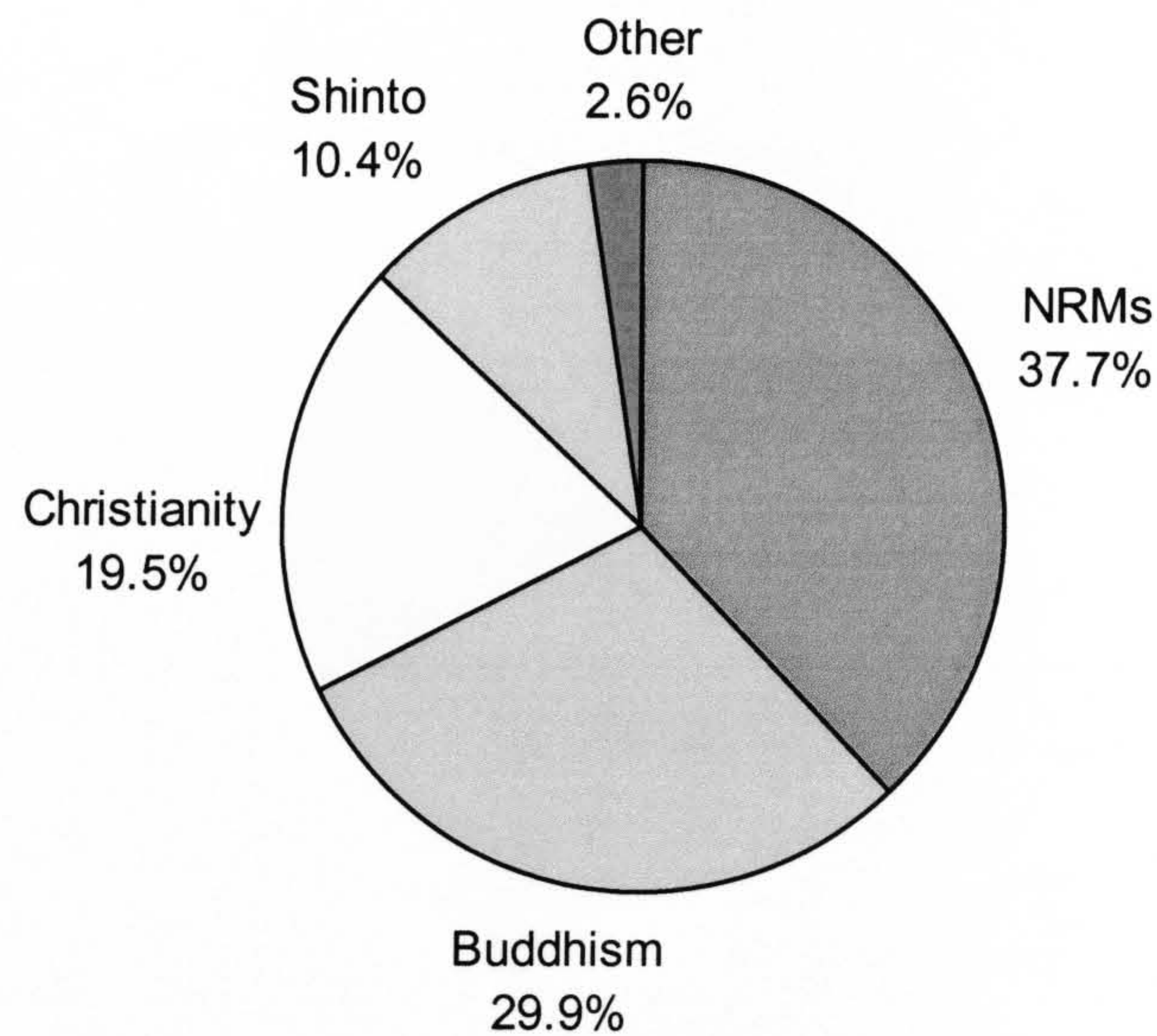
*Note: Percentages given in brackets*

I shall now look at the previous religions of the members.

#### *Previous religion*

The chart below illustrates the proportion of members who were affiliated to particular religions before they joined Kofuku-no-Kagaku.



**Chart 9. Pie chart illustrating proportion of previous religions**

The numbers of respondents are given in the following table:

**Table 9a. Previous religions**

	Ratio of total respondents		
NRMs	29	(37.7)	(17.7)
Buddhism	23	(29.9)	(14.0)
Christianity	15	(19.5)	(9.1)
Shintō	8	(10.4)	(4.9)
Other	2	(2.6)	(1.2)
TOTAL	77*	(100)	(46.9)

*Note: Percentages given in brackets*

*\* This total is higher than the total of those who claimed they had previous religious affiliation, and this is due to the fact that some respondents put more than one previous religion*

From Chart 9 and Table 9a above, it is possible to see that 23 members used to practise traditional Buddhism before they joined Kofuku-no-Kagaku, which represents 14 per cent of the total respondents and approximately 30 per cent of the respondents who claimed to have a previous religious affiliation. The three most frequently mentioned schools of Buddhism were the Pure Land School (7 people), True Pure Land School (5 people) and Nichiren School (4 people). Fifteen members or approximately 9 per cent of the total respondents, about 20 per cent of those with previous affiliation, were Christian; four Catholic and six Protestant. This is a much higher ratio than the national average, which is only 0.8 per cent.<sup>24</sup> It is possible to speculate that the content of Christian teachings within Kofuku-no-Kagaku, including the so called messages of

<sup>24</sup> According to a report dated December 1998 from the Agency for Cultural Affairs, the number of Christians in Japan is 1,761,907, which makes 0.8% of the population (Asahi Shimbun ed., 2000: 262).



Jesus, may be an attraction to Christians. Finally, the smallest figure was the eight members who were previously affiliated with Shintō.

Perhaps most significantly, 29 members, or 17.7 per cent of the total respondents, said they used to belong to another NRM before joining Kofuku-no-Kagaku. Wilson and Dobbelaere point out that there is considerable competition between NRMs in Japan (Wilson and Dobbelaere, 1994: 79), and to some extent this is illustrated in the above figure, although this does not represent a huge proportion. Interestingly, too, whereas only just over 50 per cent of Kofuku-no-Kagaku members had no previous religious affiliation, this figure was 76 per cent for members of Soka Gakkai in the UK (Wilson and Dobbelaere, 1994: 79).

The major NRMs that members of Kofuku-no-Kagaku used to belong to, given in order of highest frequency, are illustrated below:

**Table 10. Previous NRMs**

Seichō-no-Ie	7
GLA	4
Risshō Kōseikai	3
Soka Gakkai	3
Reiyūkai	2
Sekai Kyuseikyō	2
Tenrikyō	2
Agonshū	1
Nempō Shinkyō	1
Omoto	1
Shinji Shūmeikai	1
Shin'nyo-en	1
Other	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29</b>

As shown in Table 8a for 'Previous religion', 43.3 per cent of the members came from a variety of religious backgrounds. However, this leaves 51.8 per cent, the majority of respondents who claim they did not have any previous religious affiliation. This higher figure points to the fact that Kofuku-no-Kagaku has some kind of significant appeal to those who have never held religious belief before. I shall consider below in Table 16, under 'Principal Reason for Joining' whether this appeal came from



its many publications, its reinterpretation of Buddhist doctrine, and/or whether its millenarian message was important.

There is an important contextual point here. Over 30 per cent of the Japanese from the post Second World War generation who claim to have a religion, also say they follow a religion because of family custom (Ishii, 1997: 13). It must be taken into account that some members of Kofuku-no-Kagaku automatically inherited a 'family religious custom' without necessarily having a particular sense of belonging to, or practising within that religion. This might be compared to the situation in the UK, for example, where many people describe themselves as Anglican on paper, but do not necessarily have a strong connection to that faith. The question of 'Previous Religion' was designed to refer to a sense of belonging in a previous faith, whether it was traditional or new, and as such, the figure for those who said they had no previous faith at all is relatively high. They may well have had some connection to a family religious custom, but did not consider themselves to have a sense of belonging to any religion.

I wanted another way to look at the level of belief amongst the members, and whether they had an interest in something of a spiritual nature, whether they had previously been affiliated to a religion or not. I therefore asked members about their previous belief in God, Buddha, spirits and the world after death, regardless of their religious affiliation. I shall now look at the responses to this question.

*Belief in God, Buddha, spirits, the world after death and reincarnation before joining*

I broke this question down into five categories, spanning 'strong belief' to 'no belief whatsoever'. The results are interesting because, as can be seen from the table and chart below, they show a marked increase from the results concerning previous religious affiliation.

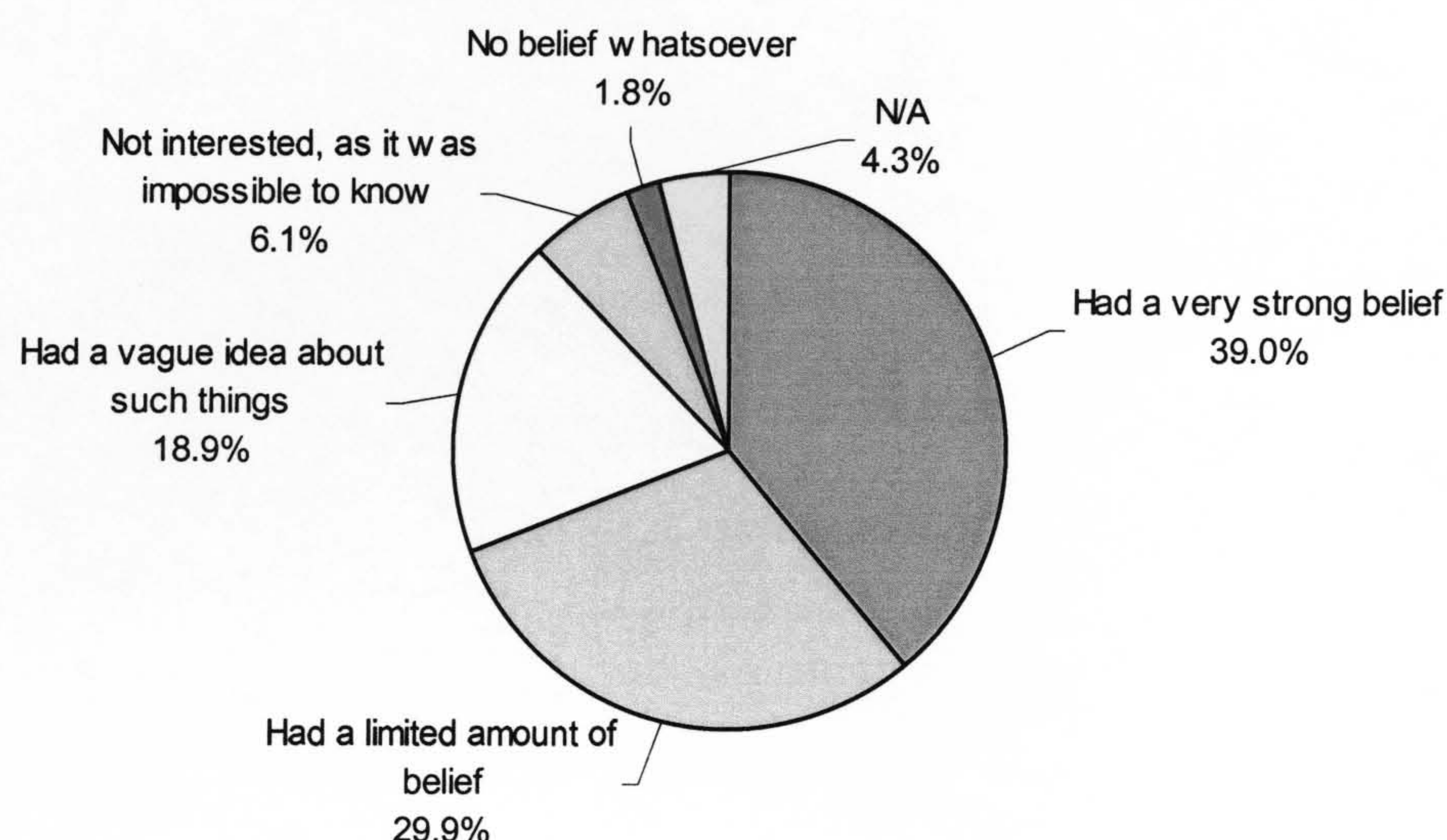
The results show that 87.8 per cent of the respondents had some kind of belief in religious and/or spiritual matters. The breakdown into the first three categories shows that 39 per cent said that they had a very strong belief before joining the Movement, 29.9 per cent said they had a limited amount of belief, and nearly 20 per cent said they had a vague idea about such things. Once again, the above figures are also much higher than the national average in Japan, where it is reported that 54 per cent claim to have a belief in the existence of the soul after death, while 43 per cent said they believe in the Buddha (NHK, 1984: 13).



**Table 11. Belief in God, Buddha, spirits, the world after death and reincarnation before joining in relation to gender and in total**

	Gender					
	Male		Female		Total	
Had a very strong belief	26	(36.6)	38	(40.9)	64	(39.0)
Had a limited amount of belief	20	(28.2)	29	(31.2)	49	(29.9)
Had a vague idea about such things	17	(23.9)	14	(15.1)	31	(18.9)
Not interested, as it was impossible to know	5	(7.0)	5	(5.4)	10	(6.1)
No belief whatsoever	0	(0.0)	3	(3.2)	3	(1.8)
N/A	3	(4.2)	4	(4.3)	7	(4.3)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>(100.0)</b>

*Note: Percentages given in brackets*

**Chart 11a. Pie chart illustrating belief in God, Buddha, spirits, the world after death and reincarnation before joining**

What Chart 11a also shows is that 6.1 per cent claimed they had not been interested in spiritual matters, as it was impossible to know about such things. Perhaps more significantly, only 1.8 per cent said they had no religious or spiritual belief whatsoever until they encountered the Movement. These last two categories combined make a total figure of 7.9 per cent, which is much lower than the figure in the section on 'Previous Religious Affiliation', where 51.8 per cent had no previous religious affiliation. The conclusion that can be drawn from this is that many people had a certain form of religious and spiritual belief without a sense of belonging to any religion or religious movement. Again, the gender figures in Table 11 above, illustrate a consistently clear pattern of women displaying a greater religiosity than men. Looking at the total figure for women in the first two categories, 72.1 per cent said they had a



limited to strong religious belief before joining Kofuku-no-Kagaku, compared to 64.8 per cent in the same two categories for men

Another question of interest was whether members had any general interest in these issues, and I shall now discuss the figures for this question.

*Level of interest in/sympathy to religion and religious issues before joining*

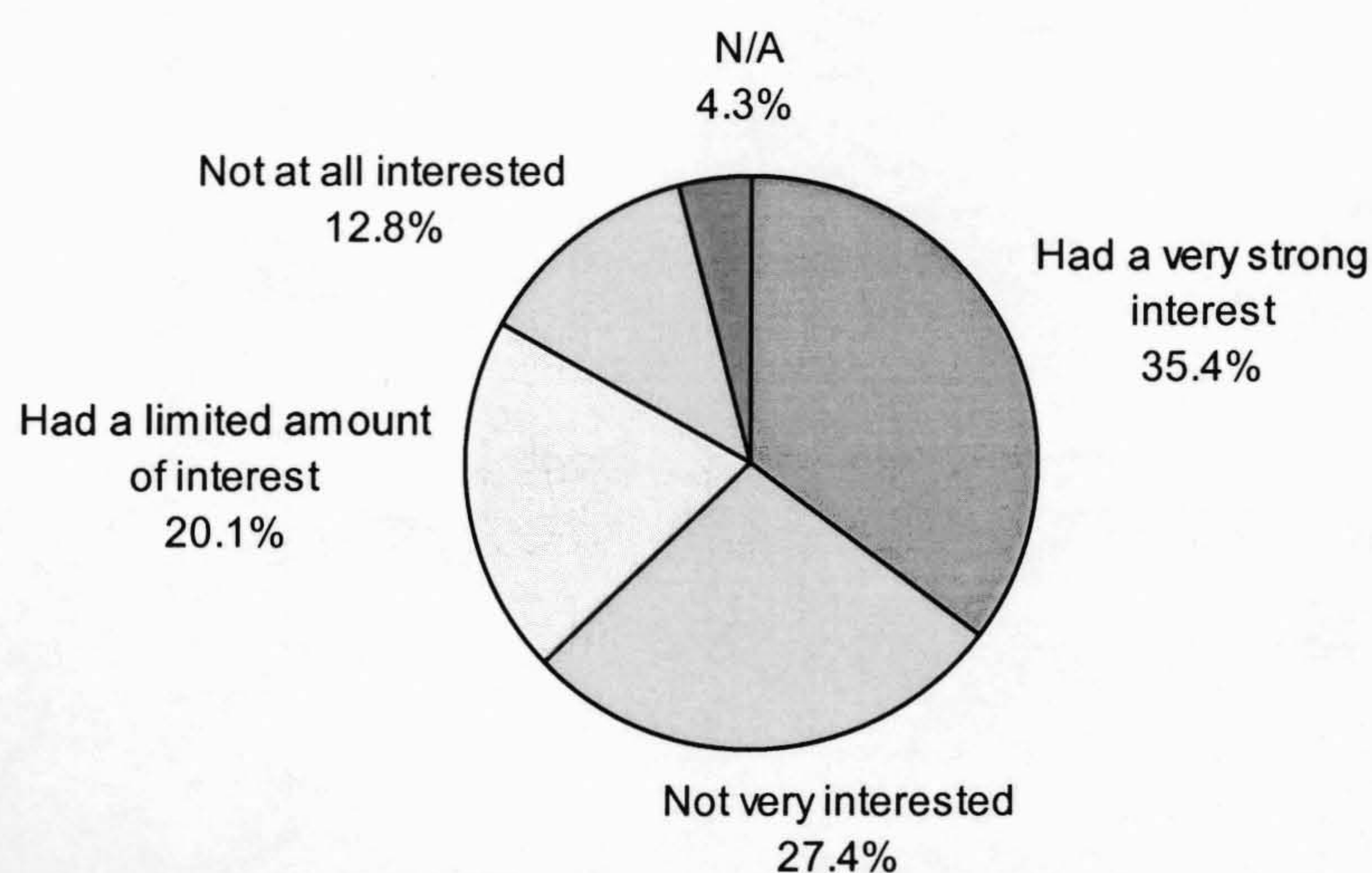
The results here are both interesting and a little confusing too. From the last two sections the data revealed that over 43 per cent of members had some previous affiliation to a religion, while a much larger figure, 68.9 per cent, had some kind of belief. However, as the table and chart below illustrate, only 55.5 per cent of the members said they had an interest, rather than belief, in religious and spiritual issues before joining Kofuku-no-Kagaku. Over 40 per cent said they were not interested in religious or spiritual subjects.

**Table 12. Level of interest in/sympathy to religion and religious issues before joining**

Had a very strong interest	58	(35.4)
Had a limited amount of interest	33	(20.1)
Not very interested	45	(27.4)
Not at all interested	21	(12.8)
N/A	7	(4.3)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>(100.0)</b>

*Note: Percentages given in brackets*

**Chart 12a. Pie chart illustrating level of interest in/sympathy to religion and religious issues before joining**



This means that even though many members (two out of five) used to belong to another religion, and a large proportion of respondents (seven out of ten) say they had



some belief in spiritual or religious matters, it seems their active interest in such issues was low.

I shall now go on to look at another measure of the members' previous religious life, by looking at their religious activity before joining.

*Religious life before joining*

The results of this question show that the largest figure of 75.6 per cent relates to the practice of visiting temples and/or shrines at New Year; the religious custom known as *hatsu mōde*. A smaller figure, 61.6 per cent said they often took part in the custom of ancestor veneration and comforting, which takes place in August during the period of *obon*.

**Table 13. Religious life before joining (multiple answers)**

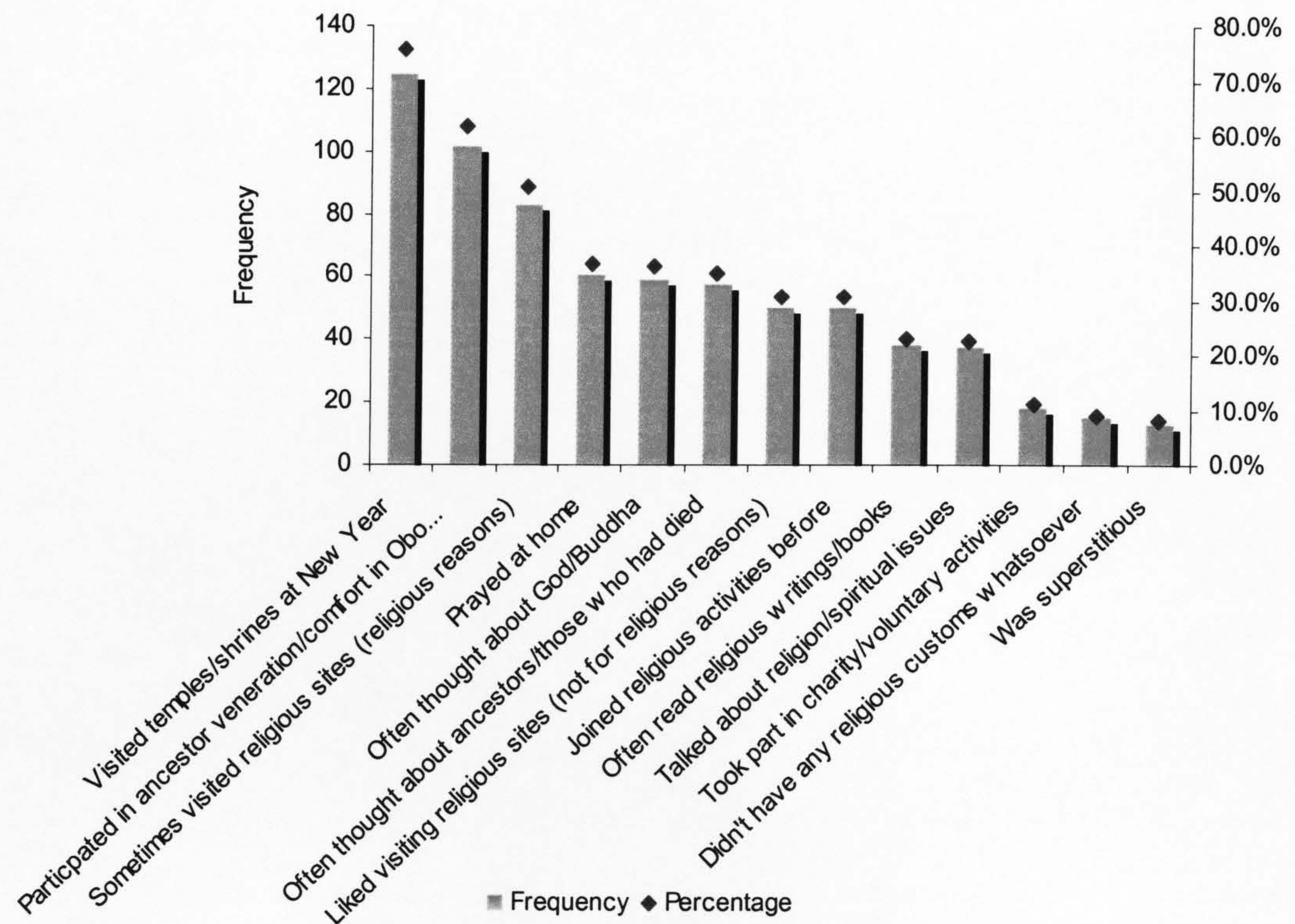
Visited temples/shrines at New Year	124	(75.6)
Participated in ancestor veneration/comfort in <i>Obon</i> season	101	(61.6)
Sometimes visited religious sites (for religious reasons)	83	(50.6)
Prayed at home	60	(36.6)
Often thought about God/Buddha	59	(36.0)
Often thought about ancestors/those who had died	57	(34.8)
Liked visiting religious sites (not for religious reasons)	50	(30.5)
Joined religious activities	50	(30.5)
Often read religious writings/books	38	(23.2)
Talked about religion/spiritual issues	37	(22.6)
Took part in charity/voluntary work	18	(11.0)
Didn't have any religious customs at all	15	(9.1)
Was superstitious	13	(7.9)

*Note:* Percentages given in brackets.

*This table is based on multiple answers, which means that the same respondent has ticked more than one box. Each frequency therefore represents a proportion of the total 164.*

However, it is important to note that the figures do not necessarily mean that the respondents were religiously active before they joined Kofuku-no-Kagaku. The meaning of these, so called, 'religious acts' are hotly debated amongst both sociologists and Japanologists; while Japanese people often appear to be very keen in expressing their religiosity through practices such as visiting temples, the same enthusiasm is not borne out by the fact that only one third of Japanese people claim to have any religious faith at all (NHK ed., 1984: 3).



**Chart 13a. Bar chart illustrating religious life before joining (multiple answers)**

If the figures from my questionnaire are compared with the data recorded in the last national survey conducted by NHK in 1984, a very similar picture is reflected. 81 per cent claimed they went to visit temples and/or shrines for *hatsu mōde* (New Year celebrations) (NHK, 1984: 7), 69 per cent said they frequently participated in *obon* (ancestor veneration) and 20 per cent said they sometimes took part in the services, which makes 89 per cent in total (ibid., 8).

After this discussion of the religious background of the members before they joined the Movement, I shall now go on to discuss the data gathered in respect of how the members encountered Kofuku-no-Kagaku, and what reason or motive they had for joining. I shall begin with the question of the triggers for joining.

## 6.7 Encountering Kofuku-no-Kagaku

### *Principal trigger for joining*

As the figures below indicate, by far the largest percentage of respondents, 61.6 per cent, decided to join Kofuku-no-Kagaku after reading its literature. For Kofuku-no-Kagaku, its publishing element is one of its key activities, if not its most important activity.

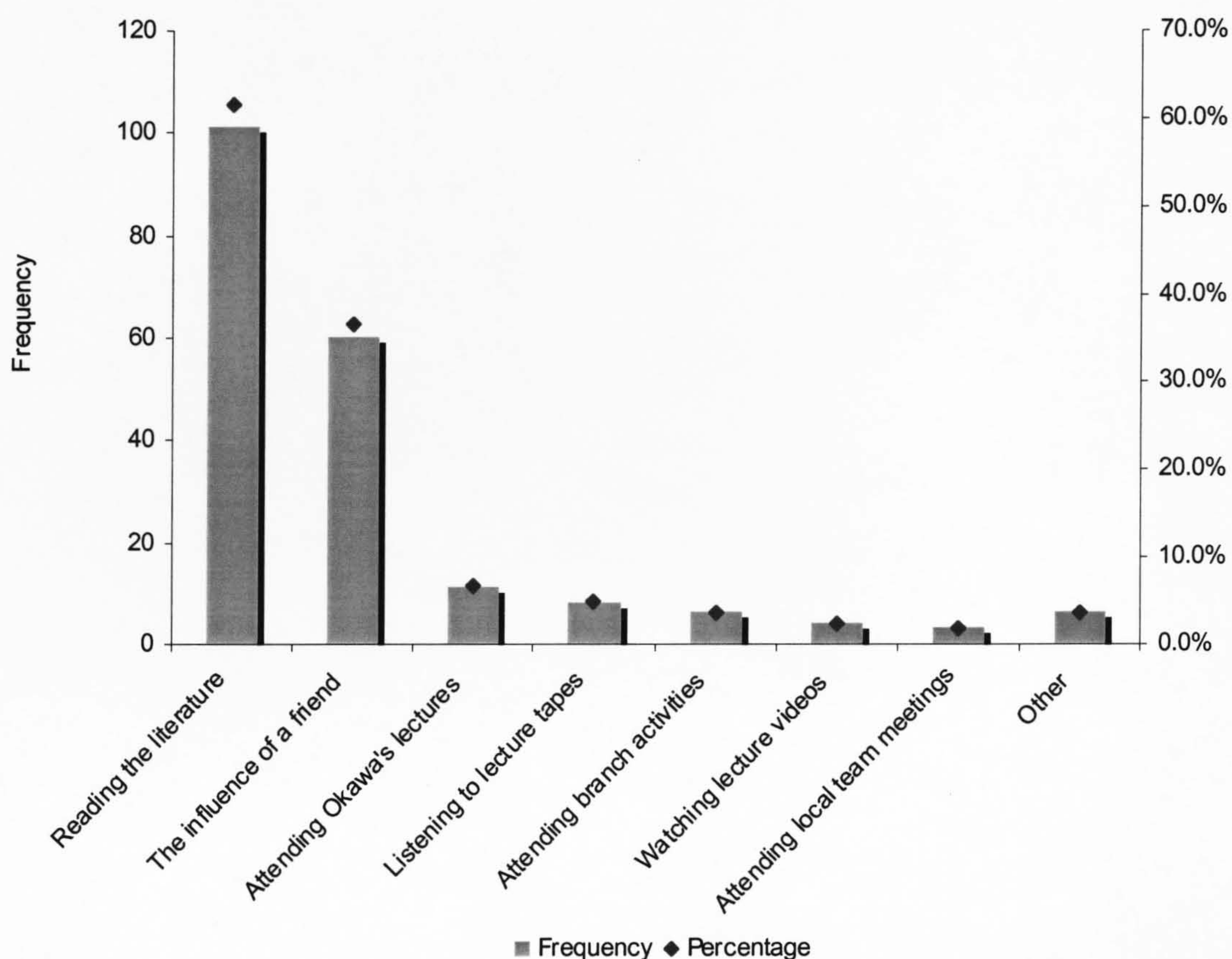


**Table 14. Principal trigger for joining Kofuku-no-Kagaku**

Reading the literature	101	(61.6)
The influence of a friend	60	(36.6)
Attending Okawa's lectures	11	(6.7)
Listening to lecture tapes	8	(4.9)
Attending branch events	6	(3.7)
Watching lecture videos	4	(2.4)
Attending local team meetings	3	(1.8)
Other	6	(3.7)

Note: Percentages given in brackets

This table is based on multiple answers, which means that the same respondent has ticked more than one box. Each frequency therefore represents a proportion of the total 164 respondents.

**Chart 14a. Bar chart illustrating principal trigger for joining Kofuku-no-Kagaku**

Inoue (1992: 29) has pointed out the similarity between the publishing activities of Kofuku-no-Kagaku and Seichō-no-Ie. For both Movements, literature has a vital part to play in disseminating their teachings and Seichō-no-Ie has long been known as a 'publishing religion' *shuppan shūkyō*, 出版宗教.

As discussed in Chapter IV, Ryuho Okawa's first step in his spiritual mission was to publish a number of books known as 'Spiritual Messages' and the keen readers of his publications made up the initial members of Kofuku-no-Kagaku. A woman in her



late 40s who was a full-time housewife and had been a member for over ten years, illustrated the importance of the literature as follows: ‘When I first read Master Okawa’s ‘The Rebirth of Buddha’<sup>25</sup>, I just couldn’t stay still anymore and had to join Kofuku-no-Kagaku immediately’ (IRH11). As discussed in the section on membership above, the importance of the literature can also be seen from the inception of the Movement, in the initial rules of membership.

There is considerable emphasis within the Movement on giving the publications as high<sup>a</sup> profile as possible in bookshops. Shops are visited regularly by special volunteers called ‘SPMs’ (Special Promotion Members), and sometimes by staff from IRH Press (Kofuku-no-Kagaku’s publishing company) and asked to make special displays of the latest Kofuku-no-Kagaku titles. When I was in Kyoto, Shiga and Tokyo during my fieldwork, it was clear that this strategy was working, as it was not uncommon to see a table in a large bookshop dedicated to the Movement’s latest titles placed in a prominent position. I went to several bookshops with SPMs to observe how the promotion was carried out. I noticed that the SPMs had already established a good relationship with the bookshop managers; they talked in a friendly manner together, and discussed such things as forthcoming publications and how the books had been selling. The SPM also checked the stock levels in the shop and beautifully arranged the books out on the shelves.

The other significant encounter with the Movement was made through an existing member; over one third of the members joined in this way. This type of missionary work is usually carried out within a circle of acquaintances, rather than by approaching strangers. It is clear from this figure that the power of the members’ missionary activities is an extremely strong factor in the growth of the Movement, although the literature appears more powerful. By contrast, Wilson and Dobbelaere’s research on Soka Gakkai in the UK reveals a very different picture as, 94 per cent of the members joined because of the influence of someone who was already a member of the Movement (Wilson and Dobbelaere, 1994: 50) compared with 36.6 per cent in Kofuku-no-Kagaku. All other triggers are much less significant than the two discussed above, as all fall below the 10 per cent mark.

---

<sup>25</sup> ‘The Rebirth of Buddha’ (or *Buddha Saitan* 仏陀再誕) is one of the most fundamental pieces of literature that Kofuku-no-Kagaku has published. This book is written throughout in a distinctive, direct-sermon style, as though the Buddha was talking directly to his disciples. The first edition was published in November 1989. A number of Okawa’s earlier publications are written in the same style, notably ‘The Eternal Buddha’ (*Eien no Buddha*: Okawa, 1991f) and ‘The Terrifying Revelations of Nostradamus’ (*Nostradamus Senritsu no Keiji*, 1991).



I will now go on to look at what the members consider to be the most important books published by the Movement.

*Most important books for the members*

**Table 15. Most important books (first choice)**

The Laws of the Sun	77	(54.2)
The Rebirth of Buddha	14	(9.9)
A Revolution of Happiness ( <i>Kofuku no Kakumei</i> )	9	(6.3)
The Eternal Buddha ( <i>Eien no Buddha</i> )	8	(5.6)
The Essence of Buddha	5	(3.5)
The Laws of Eternity	3	(2.1)
Love, Nurture and Forgive	3	(2.1)

**Table 15a. Most important books (second choice)**

The Laws of Eternity	27	(19.9)
The Laws of the Sun	18	(13.2)
The Rebirth of Buddha	15	(11.0)
A Revolution of Happiness ( <i>Kofuku no Kakumei</i> )	12	(8.8)
The Eternal Buddha ( <i>Eien no Buddha</i> )	10	(7.4)
The Essence of Buddha	9	(6.6)
Invincible Thinking	8	(5.9)

**Table 15b. Most important books (combined total)**

The Laws of the Sun	95	(34.2)
The Laws of Eternity	30	(10.8)
The Rebirth of Buddha	29	(10.4)
A Revolution of Happiness ( <i>Kofuku no Kakumei</i> )	21	(7.6)
The Eternal Buddha ( <i>Eien no Buddha</i> )	18	(6.5)
The Essence of Buddha	14	(5.0)
Invincible Thinking	9	(3.2)

*Note: Percentages given in brackets*

*The titles that are available in English are given with their official English names. The titles that are available in Japanese only are given in English with the Japanese title in brackets. The total percentage is not 100% because only the first seven books are considered here.*

In the survey, I asked the members if they considered any of the books published by Kofuku-no-Kagaku to be of particular importance to them. I did this in order to see if there were any common tendencies in the choices of the members, and, therefore, what ideas, if any, were popular. The reason why I asked them to choose two titles



rather than one was that, limited to one choice I expected that it was highly likely the respondents would simply choose a book that the Movement considers to be its most important publication, such as 'The Laws of the Sun', rather than a personal favourite.

The three tables above illustrate the seven most frequently chosen books; the first table illustrates the first choices of the members, the second illustrates the second choices, and the third illustrates the combined total of these two tables. 35 different titles came up in the members' choices, including the Movement's main prayer book, The Dharma of the Right Mind. The first table shows that the most popular book, as expected, is 'The Laws of the Sun', which was chosen by 54.2 per cent as their favourite publication. The second most popular book was 'The Rebirth of Buddha', but this was chosen by a mere 9.9 per cent of the respondents.

The second table reveals some interesting results. 20 per cent of the respondents chose 'The Laws of Eternity' as their second choice. This represents a considerable jump from the 2.1 per cent that chose this book as their first choice, which may indicate that it is a more personal favourite.

The third table, the choices combined, reveals The Laws of the Sun, The Laws of Eternity and The Rebirth of Buddha as the three most popular books that are read by the members of Kofuku-no-Kagaku. I have discussed the content of these publications in detail in Chapter V (p.101-2). In relation to publications concerning the millenarian ideas of the Movement, none of the respondents chose Okawa's books concerning apocalyptic predictions, while a few people chose books about the creation of Utopia, but they do not appear in the top seven of any of the tables above. It appears that the ideas that are really popular amongst the members either concern Kofuku-no-Kagaku's central teachings, such as the details given in The Laws of the Sun, or books with a more Buddhist flavour, such as 'The Rebirth of Buddha' and 'The Essence of Buddha'. Books on business or the spiritual messages appeared on the list, but were not very popular. More complex books, such as the 'Silent Buddha', which discusses traditional Buddhist doctrine, were also not particularly popular.

I shall now discuss the main motives or reasons why members chose to join the Movement.

#### *Principal reason or motive for joining*

The members of Kofuku-no-Kagaku chose from a wide range of reasons for joining the Movement. First amongst these was the chance 'to develop, improve and change', which was chosen by 40.2 per cent of the members, last was the chance to achieve



material benefit (*riyaku*) (see Table 16 and discussed below p.173), which was not chosen by anyone. There is a sharp contrast to be drawn here between ‘new’ new religions and the older new religions in Japan. The older new religions from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries were characterised by their concern with liberation from such problems as oppression, abject poverty or rapid and bewildering social change caused by, for instance, industrialisation and westernisation. This contrast is perhaps best illustrated by the severe economic depression that Japan was facing, especially in the 1920s, and soon after the Second World War.

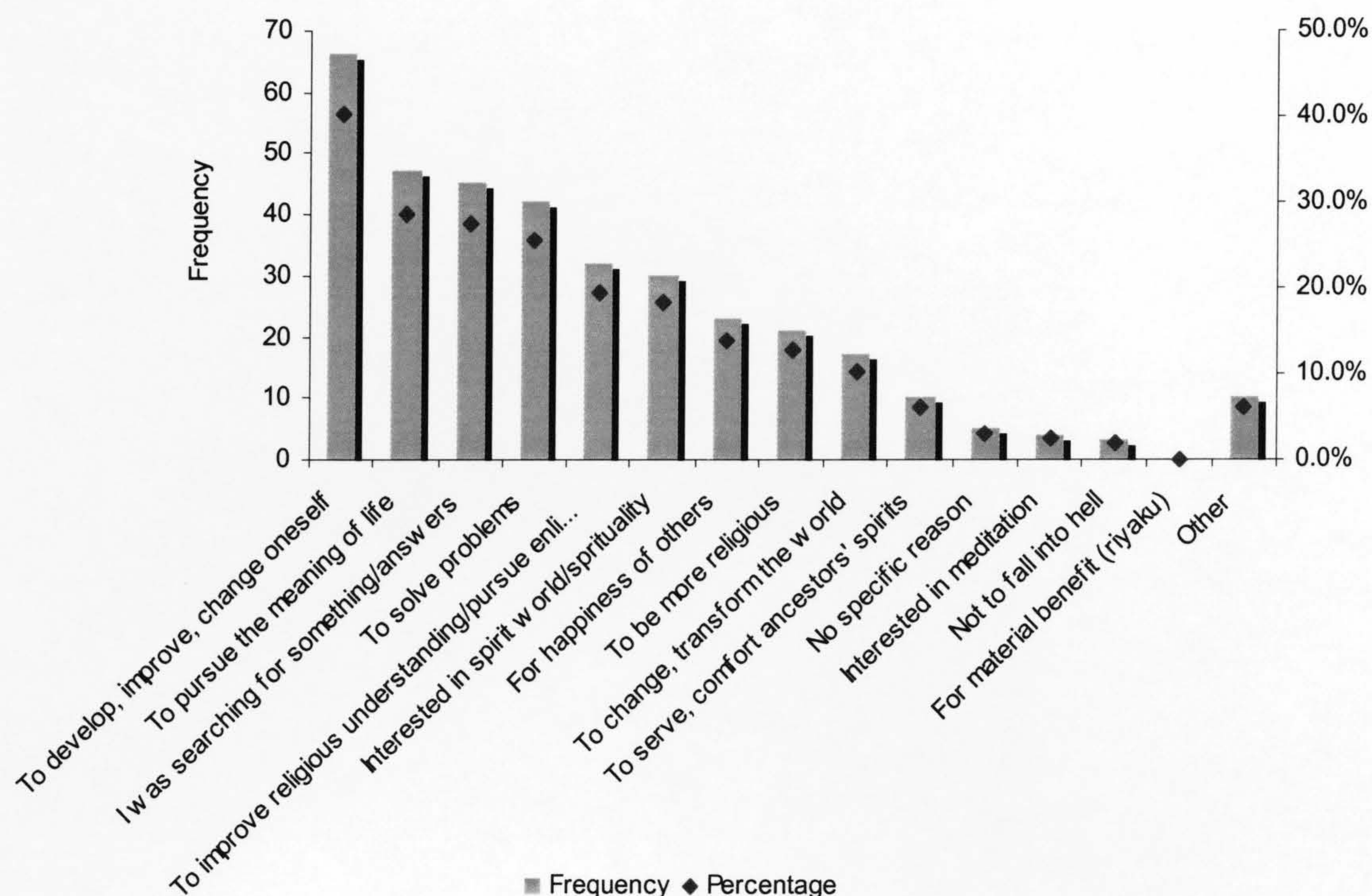
**Table 16. Principal reason or motive for joining**

To develop, improve, change oneself	66	(40.2)
To pursue the meaning of life	47	(28.7)
I was searching for something/answers	45	(27.4)
To solve problems (eg. relationship, family, work, illness)	42	(25.6)
To improve religious understanding/pursue enlightenment	32	(19.5)
Interested in spirit world/spirituality	30	(18.3)
For happiness of others	23	(14.0)
To be more religious	21	(12.8)
To change, transform the world	17	(10.4)
To serve, comfort ancestors' spirits	10	(6.1)
No specific reason	5	(3.0)
Interested in meditation	4	(2.4)
Not to fall into hell	3	(1.8)
For material benefit ( <i>genze-riyaku</i> )	0	(0.0)
Other	10	(6.1)

*Note: Percentages given in brackets*

*This table is based on multiple answers, which means that the same respondent has ticked more than one box. Each frequency therefore represents a proportion of the total 164 respondents in total (or a percentage of the total respondents which is given in brackets).*



**Chart 16a. Bar chart illustrating principal reason or motive for joining**

So what are members of 'new' new religions who are no longer facing severe economic depression seeking? Somers points out that new NRMs are perceived to have the answers to more modern dilemmas such as the meaning of life and 'what is happening in the world' (Somers, 1994: 57). Many of the members spoke of these dilemmas and how the Movement had helped them. A 26-year-old member said of her reason for joining:

'I wanted to solve some personal problems, and I was also very interested and wanted to know more about the Spirit World, and the meaning of life. I think I was always searching for something, and I thought this Movement had answers to these questions. I was very interested in spirituality and religion and was 100 per cent sure of the existence of the soul, the world after death and God. I asked many people about these things, but nobody could give me any clear answers, so I was very afraid of death as I didn't know what was going to happen when I die. I didn't know what was going to happen to me in the future either, and I often cried. I was worried about these things, but the fear's completely gone now'. (IRH25)

One 54-year-old male, who was an engineer, said: 'I used to worry about disappearing after death, but now I believe in eternal life I am no longer worried about what will happen to me when I die' (IRH9). One 48-year-old business man, a graduate who joined in the late 1980s said: 'Because I came to understand the reason for life, I am now living a really positive life' (IRH10). A 25-year-old woman who joined in the late 1980s and is a part-time worker, said: 'I feel great happiness when I realise there



are many people and there is me, that my existence is important, and I have a role to play' (IRH17). Another, a 45-year-old female, a part-time worker who joined in the late 1980s said:

'Once I realised that the outside world and I are 'one' and the same thing, I was able to forgive others. This 'Oneness' - everything around me, everybody, animals and even plants around me are related to me because of our interdependence – and now I can love all of them. I get a great sense of happiness from the discovery that I am living my life with challenges: whatever problem occurs I am not anxious or scared anymore, and I can consider them to be my very own questions of life, like my own exam questions. I can accept all that life throws at me when I know it is for the development of my soul, because I believe in eternal life.' (IRH22)

The search for the 'meaning of life' was the second most popular reason or motive for joining Kofuku-no-Kagaku and was chosen by 28.7 per cent. The third reason was 'searching for something/answers', which was chosen by 27.4 per cent. These first three reasons for joining thus all fall into the category of spiritual, philosophical or psychological dilemmas. The reasons more common amongst the older new religions, such as solving family, work, illness, financial and relationship problems are only the fourth most popular in Kofuku-no-Kagaku at 25.4 per cent. This also means, however, that one in four members are concerned with these, what might be described as more this-worldly problems, and shows that they are still an important part the reasons for joining Kofuku-no-Kagaku. The interviews revealed the importance of these problems too. One 42-year-old businessman, who joined in the mid 1990s said:

'I used to believe that bad things came from our ancestors, and we had no control over them, but now I understand that is not the case and that bad things are in fact my own responsibility. As a result of my new found understanding I have more energy and more power at work and in life generally'. (IRH2)

One 44-year-old female graduate, a teacher who joined in the early 1990s, said: 'I have become very active, very tolerant, and my ability at work has improved; by practising the Truth, problems are always solved, and suffering disappears' (IRH8). A 39-year-old self-employed female, a graduate who joined in the late 1980s, said: 'I have come to appreciate how much joy I am given through positive relationships' (IRH3).

Another interesting outcome of the survey is that only 6.1 per cent claim they joined in order to venerate and comfort their ancestors' spirits. This is significant because ancestor veneration has historically always been very important in Japanese society, and widely practised in both traditional and new religions. In NRMs such as Reiyūkai, Risshō Kōseikai and Seichō-no-Ie, for example, ancestor veneration is widely practised. Kofuku-no-Kagaku, however, teaches a distinctive form of ancestor



veneration and comfort, as it believes ancestors' spirits that are dwelling happily in heaven do not need the various rituals associated with ancestor comforting. However, in line with its doctrine of 'self-responsibility', the Movement believes that ancestors who are not in heaven and are unhappy and suffering in hell, or trapped on earth as stray spirits, are not there because of their descendants, but rather because of their actions and thoughts while they were alive on earth. These souls have no idea why they are suffering, and, as they do not know how to practise self-reflection, they do not realise what is causing their suffering. Therefore, Kofuku-no-Kagaku teaches that 'real' ancestor comforting is to give souls the opportunity to realise why they are unhappy. This is achieved by living according to Buddha's Truth and by creating a harmonious and happy family, and from this example of the right way to live, the suffering souls become aware of their plight and change their situation themselves. Kofuku-no-Kagaku's ancestor comfort is thus understood to come from the example of people living in this world who are already saved by the Buddha's Truth. The Movement believes this interpretation to be the first and true meaning of ancestor worship (Kofuku-no-Kagaku ed., 1994, 190-5).

Another significant factor, mentioned above, is the fact that no one chose 'to achieve material benefit' (*genze riyaku*) as their reason for joining the Movement. This is perhaps surprising as, in contemporary Japan, people still visit various temples and shrines in the belief that the gods, buddhas and bodhisattvas of these sites will grant them benefits called *riyaku*, or the more honorific term *goriyaku* ご利益 if they have faith in them. For example, some kami are believed to bring people success in business, while others are believed to bring success in entrance exams, in finding a partner or in healing. One possible reason for this inconsistency is that the members of Kofuku-no-Kagaku were 'seekers' of spiritual and philosophical answers, rather than pursuers of this-worldly benefits. There may also be a negative connotation to the term *riyaku* for the members. This is because of the Buddhist principles within Kofuku-no-Kagaku which discourage attachment to material or this-worldly things. The Movement strongly declares that it is not what it terms a 'goriyaku faith' (*goriyaku shinkō* ご利益信仰) (ibid., 17). Achieving this-worldly benefit, including solving this-worldly problems, still seems to be appealing in the modern world today. For instance, Wilson and Dobbelaere's research reveals that in Soka Gakkai today there is still considerable emphasis placed on this-worldly benefit; about 20 per cent joined Soka Gakkai in the UK to achieve 'wealth, health and a variety of material blessings' (Wilson and Dobbelaere, 1994: 55). It is important to note also that 25.6 per cent of Kofuku-no-



Kagaku members chose 'to solve problems' as one of their reasons for joining and so the contrast is not a strict one; problems when put in this way, were chosen by a significant number of members.

I shall now consider what the members have chosen to be the most attractive features of the Movement.

*Attractive features of the Movement*

It is clear from Table 17 and Chart 17a below that Okawa's teachings are seen as the most attractive feature of the Movement, as they were chosen by 110 people or 67.1 per cent of the respondents.

**Table 17. The attractive features of Kofuku-no-Kagaku**

Doctrine	110	(67.1)
Master Okawa's lectures	73	(44.5)
Messages from the spirits	68	(41.5)
Predictions	60	(37.8)
Master Okawa	53	(32.3)
Various religious festivals/prayer sessions	30	(18.3)
Religious training, such as meditation, self-reflection	26	(15.9)
Style of faith/belief	25	(15.2)
Ordinary members	22	(13.4)
Devotion to the Three Jewels	21	(12.8)
Miracles	20	(12.2)
Meetings	16	(9.8)
Religious practice, such as El Cantare Healing/Fight	15	(9.1)
Members of staff	8	(4.9)
Spiritual phenomena	7	(4.3)
Nothing in particular	7	(4.3)
Other	7	(4.3)

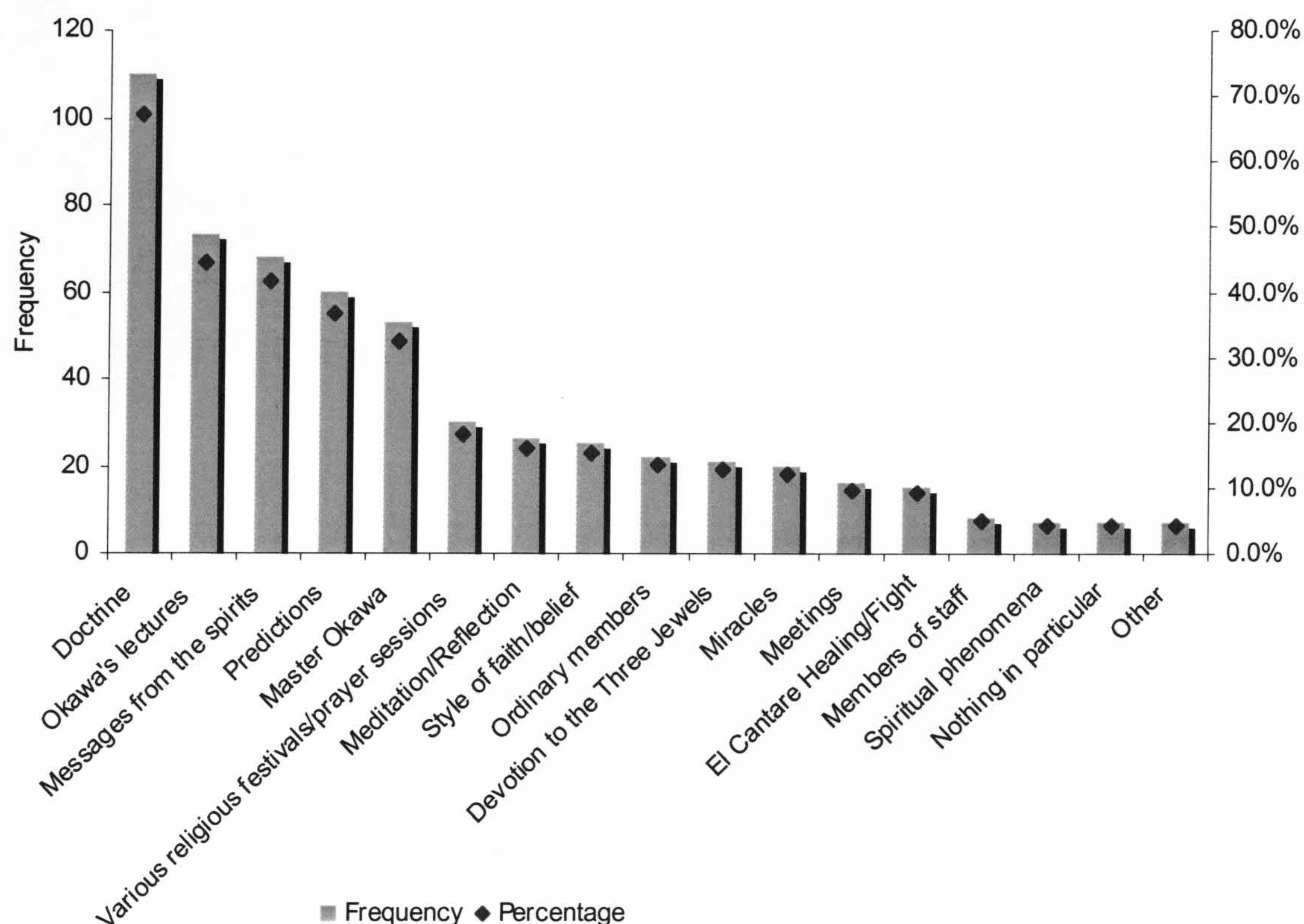
*Note: Percentages given in brackets*

The figures for practice, such as religious festivals, prayer sessions, meditation and self-reflection for example, are much lower, as are the attraction of other members in the Movement, with only 13.4 per cent stating that other members are an attractive feature of the Movement. The attraction of Kofuku-no-Kagaku staff is also surprisingly low, as they were chosen by only 4.9 per cent of respondents. It is interesting to consider that Okawa's 'messages from the spirits' are a significant attraction, and were



chosen by 41.5 per cent of the respondents, despite the fact that Kofuku-no-Kagaku no longer publishes these direct spiritual messages outside the Movement, apart from spiritual messages from the Buddha. As discussed in Chapter IV [(p.92)], these messages were withdrawn from sale in 1994 and later reintroduced, but only for members. It may be possible to speculate, if the Movement is aware of their popularity, that this may be one reason why the messages were reintroduced.

**Chart 17a. Bar chart illustrating the attractive features of Kofuku-no-Kagaku**



Another important point from these figures is the vital attraction Okawa himself provides; the first two attractions are Okawa's teachings, followed by his lectures, and Okawa himself is fifth on the list; it is clear that his influence far exceeds that of anyone else in the Movement.

Also of interest is the figure of 37.8 per cent that came to find Okawa's predictions about the future to be an attractive element within the Movement, and is something I shall discuss further in the following chapter.

## 6.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I looked closely at the details of membership within Kofuku-no-Kagaku, the social composition of its members, as well as the attractions that the Movement holds for them.



The details of membership have revealed that from the initial entrance requirements to become a member of the Movement, as well as the continued importance on learning, there is a great deal of emphasis on study in Kofuku-no-Kagaku. The study is practical in nature, and relates to what the Movement calls 'The Buddha's Truth'. This Truth is knowledge, supported by belief in the High Divine Spirit El Cantare, and Okawa, who can lead members to change themselves and become happier people; conceived of as those who can deal with problems and live with a peaceful mind. Significantly, progress in members' study is linked directly to how much someone is contributing to the creation of the Utopia; the harder they study the more enlightened they become, and the more the world is filled with enlightened people. This is sometimes expressed in the Movement as the bringing down of the 'bodhisattva world' (*bosatsu kai* 菩薩界) on earth.

The demographic data reveals that members come from a wide age range, have high educational achievements, hold good jobs and that very few, only 1.2 per cent, are unemployed. It is clear from the data that members consider the chance to change themselves as a very important reason for joining the Movement; 40.2 per cent of members joined the Movement in order to develop, improve and change themselves. As mentioned above, the chance for the members to change is provided by the Movement through its study programme. I have mentioned above that emphasis on changing and achieving happiness is linked to the coming about of the Utopia in Kofuku-no-Kagaku. What the information presented in the chapter appears to reveal, through both the approach of the Movement to study, and the data given by the members, is that the Movement provides an emphasis on self-transformation in order for the Utopia, which is the Movement's Millennium, to come about, and that this possibility of self-transformation is the significant attraction for those who join the Movement.

I shall now go on in the following chapter to look more closely at this conception of the Millennium in Kofuku-no-Kagaku.



## VII. Kofuku-no-Kagaku as a Millenarian Movement

### 7.1 Contents of Chapter

In the last chapter, I looked closely at the social composition and the demographic data of the members of Kofuku-no-Kagaku, as well as such questions as the key attractions the Movement holds for them. In relation to the millenarian teachings in the Movement, it is clear from the data gathered from the members in the questionnaire survey that the millenarian element plays an important role in the attraction of and continued commitment to the Movement. I have shown from the data gathered that the members have a particular conception of the Millennium, and that it relates closely with their ideas about their own happiness and enlightenment. This is expressed in the following way: their conception of the coming about of the Millennium is directly related to a change in themselves that they are working hard to achieve with their spiritual outlook, such as becoming a better person or changing the negative tendencies of their mind, such as being judgmental or short-tempered, and this is achieved by learning how to think and act according to the Buddha's Truth, as taught by President Okawa. As Kofuku-no-Kagaku's teachings spread, and more and more people change in the same way it is believed that Kofuku-no-Kagaku's Utopia will come about.

For Kofuku-no-Kagaku, then, the Millennium consists of people who have gone through a process of spiritual awakening and self-transformation. That is, by means of individuals transforming themselves, the world will be transformed and, hence, there will arise the Utopia; the most frequently quoted date for this was the year 2020 (Okawa, 1993a: 37).

In this chapter I will examine what this self-transformation leading to the Utopia consists of. Before that, however, I want to discuss the apocalyptic dimension of Kofuku-no-Kagaku's vision. This is because, from the earliest days of the Movement in 1986 until around 1994, there was a pronounced stress on cataclysm before the advent of the Utopia, particularly in 1991. However, as discussed in Chapter IV, in 1994 a significant change in doctrine began as the Movement moved away from its early, eclectic approach and started to distance itself from references it had made to many different historical figures, including Moses, Takahashi and Nostradamus. It appears that because talk of these 'Minor Heaven' elements was discouraged, so was discussion on the Apocalypse. Despite this, discussions on the Apocalypse continued until 1996 when emphasis on the Apocalypse shifted completely and stress was placed on hope for the future rather than fear of catastrophe. This change became explicit in Okawa's



lecture in 1996 ‘The Heart that Believes in the Future’ (Okawa, 1998a). It seems that from this point the Apocalypse became almost irrelevant in Kofuku-no-Kagaku’s doctrine and activity.

## 7.2 Kofuku-no-Kagaku’s Apocalyptic Vision, Circa 1986 to 1996

During Kofuku-no-Kagaku’s first eight years, up until 1994, there was a pronounced stress on impending catastrophe, while during 1994 and 1995 emphasis on catastrophe was still present, but it had begun to shift, and by 1996 it had shifted completely.

Okawa talked about the Apocalypse in his second ever public lecture, entitled ‘The Principle of Love’, held on 31<sup>st</sup> May 1987, with reference to Nostradamus’ predictions for the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Okawa explained that what Nostradamus had foreseen was the coming of a devastating period around the seventh month of the year 1999<sup>1</sup>, but according to Okawa, Nostradamus had also predicted a New Golden Age for mankind:

‘...in the Country of the East will rise Hermes, whose prosperity will save humankind, and the offspring of angels who descend on earth when ‘The Laws of the Sun’ is taught in the Country of the East, will save the world...’ ‘If this does not come, the history of humankind will reach an end by the year 2000; however, when the ‘Laws of the Sun’ is taught in the Country of the East, humankind will reach their Golden Age.’ (Okawa, 1990b: 81-2)

In this lecture, Okawa declared: ‘I have appeared before you in order to create the history after the year 2000 that Nostradamus foretold’ (Okawa, 1990b: 82). He then stated to his audience of about 900: ‘All of you who have gathered here today were born to establish the Golden Age and it’s not coincidental that you are here’, and: ‘a great power will have to spring up from Japan in order to create the history of humankind after 2000’ (ibid., 82).<sup>2</sup> The imminence of this critical period, as well as the Utopia that Okawa foresaw, is further clarified by a later interview he gave to the Financial Times in 1991<sup>3</sup> when Okawa revealed his original predictions concerning the future and, regarding the following decade, said:

‘There will be wars, natural disasters, new plagues...’. ‘People in Europe especially will experience a very tragic ten years...’. ‘It will continue, but after 2020 the Golden Age will start.’ (Okawa, 1993a: 36-7; 1995a: 28-9)

---

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter V, Footnote 23 for more details on Nostradamus’ predictions.

<sup>2</sup> For the entire lecture see: Okawa, 1990b: Ch.2.

<sup>3</sup> For the entire transcription see: Okawa, 1993a and 1995a, Ch.I. The articles featuring this interview appeared in ‘The Financial Times’, December 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> 1991, with the headline ‘*Japan bows to a new god*’. Five months prior to this, the Financial Times published another article on Okawa and Kofuku-no-Kagaku on July 19<sup>th</sup> (1991), entitled ‘*Many happy returns for RO’s Movement*’. See also: ‘*Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly*’, No.55, 9/1991: 108-9.



It is important to note that Kofuku-no-Kagaku's ideas concerning apocalyptic calamities should be understood to be separate from the coming about of the New Ideal World, nor were these events understood as the ultimate punishment of God on an evil people. This is because, as discussed earlier, such cataclysm is explained as a reaction of the Earth to humans' minds and actions that are causing problems on its surface. The Utopia will come about when each individual attains true happiness, also referred to as enlightenment. What brings this about is Kofuku-no-Kagaku's training methods that create happiness in each individual, not an apocalyptic cataclysm brought about by a supernatural power that will wipe away the old and herald in the new. Despite this, however, supernatural powers do play a very important part in the Movement's Utopia, as I will discuss below, as High Divine Spirits are understood to be helping humankind avoid disaster.

In my view, discussions on the Apocalypse definitely played a very important sociological function in the Movement's early history. The concept of imminent cataclysm had more than just a strong impact as a powerful message, it also fuelled members' enthusiasm for saving the world, especially when this teaching was particularly strongly emphasised during the early 1990s. In Chapter VI I have shown that it also appears to have had a great impact on the membership numbers of the movement, as their most dramatic rise was seen in 1991, when apocalyptic discussions were at their height in the Movement. As Clarke points out, millenarian ideas in NRMs can be seen: 'as a strategy to carry people over into the next stage in their social and moral history, and to great effect' and: 'This ideology of change, grounded on the twin pillars of fear and hope, is effective psychologically' (Clarke, 1999: 16). It is certainly the case that millennial expectation, and the blend of hope and awe that it brings, gives 'evangelical fire' to believers, by giving them a very tangible incentive to study and spread the message to others as quickly as they can – they do not have much time left.

However, as already mentioned, Kofuku-no-Kagaku did not claim that the Apocalypse would be an act of God, and that unless people repented they would be punished. This was unlike some new religions, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventhday Adventists, which are both actively spreading apocalyptic messages in Japan, early Omoto and some Nichiren school NRMs, that taught that only the religious or good members would survive the coming catastrophes. There was, however, a certain mood of tension within Kofuku-no-Kagaku and many active members did warn of the impending Apocalypse. Added to this it appeared at this time that the main topic of discussion seemed to centre around the Apocalypse.



As mentioned above, in 1994 Kofuku-no-Kagaku slowly began to shift its emphasis away from reference to the Apocalypse. I was constantly being given the impression, when I attended meetings around this time that emphasis on the Apocalypse as a really serious threat in the immediate future was decreasing. It was, however, not until the middle of 1996 that this shift in emphasis became explicit. If this doctrine played such a crucial role within the Movement, why was it eventually phased out? I showed in Chapter IV (p.78-81) how the initial shift concerning the Apocalypse in 1994 was accompanied by other shifts, namely away from its eclectic approach and towards a new emphasis on Buddhism and the role of El Cantare. It was also around this time that Kofuku-no-Kagaku started to criticise NRMs, particularly GLA, and label them as religions of 'Minor Heaven'. These changes coincided with criticisms that Kofuku-no-Kagaku was coming under, both for being eclectic and having little original to say, and for being nationalistic and using Nostradamus in particular to further its message. I shall discuss below, in section 7.3, how the Movement denied these criticisms, but the shift in emphasis appears to be a response, if in part, to this criticism.

Even after 1994, however, Kofuku-no-Kagaku continued discussions on the Apocalypse for a while. The Movement released its first feature film, based on the terrifying predictions of Nostradamus, in September 1994. In July 1995, a newly revised version of 'The Golden Laws' or *Shin-Ogon no Hō* 新黄金の法 (Okawa, 1995b), was published, and while references to impending destruction could have been removed, they were not (Okawa, 1995b: 320-4). In the same year, Kofuku-no-Kagaku also published another book called 'The Buddha Speaks' (Okawa, 1995a), the English version of Okawa's 'Frankly Speaking', 1993a, which was a collection of interviews that Okawa gave with some journalists and other critics in 1991. In the interview Okawa gave with the Financial Times, his predictions about an extremely difficult period, as well as his observation that the Prophets of the Old Testament had always appeared on earth during periods of crisis were republished. Okawa gave the impression that the 1990s was indeed a period of crisis, but at the same time a period of hope (Okawa, 1995a: 29).

The Movement released the full-length feature film called '*The Terrifying Revelations of Nostradamus*' on 10<sup>th</sup> September 1994, and it relates closely to the Movement's ideas about the Apocalypse and the Millennium. The film attracted many viewers - members and non-members alike - and unusually for its religious theme, it was distributed by the major film distributor, Tōei. Okawa himself was the executive producer and a number of high profile actors were involved, including the actress and



member Tomoko Ogawa. Although the timing of the film's release came after the Movement had started to shift its emphasis away from 'Minor Heaven' qualities, including Nostradamus and his predictions, I have already mentioned in Chapter IV that the film's timing was understandable from another viewpoint. It was, for example, just five years before the crucial year of 1999, and the popular topic of Nostradamus would no doubt have helped to promote the film. It is also possible to speculate that as Kofuku-no-Kagaku had become widely known in Japan by this time, it was a good time to promote itself in this way.

The film addresses why disasters occur on earth, depicted as a conflict between good and evil. Intertwined with this conflict is a scene of 'High Divine Spirits' discussing what is happening on earth and what can be done to prevent the imminent disasters it is facing. The High Divine Spirits are depicted in different ways; as angels, from many different racial backgrounds, who operate in a 'control zone' where they influence what is happening on Earth; as Japanese Shintō gods who discuss the current situation in Japan; and higher Archangels that deal with important decision making. Historical figures also appear; one of the Archangels, called Caesar, descends on earth and is born as Mikhail Gorbachev.

The conflict is shown as a struggle between 'light' and 'dark'; two elements that are depicted as governing the earth. The light is symbolic of the sacred nature of the Heavenly World, as well as High Divine Spirits, and represents their power and love. The darkness is symbolic of 'evil thoughts' called *Aku-sōnen* 悪想念, and is depicted as a thick, dark cloud. Large amounts of this cloud are shown rising from such historical events as colonisation by Western super-powers, the communist regime, world wars, possession of nuclear weapons, and most importantly of all, the wrong thoughts and attitudes of individuals who embody such things as selfishness and materialism. The High Divine Angels and Nostradamus are shown displaying particular discomfort with the use of nuclear power at the end of the Second World War. Evil thoughts are considered to be dangerous because they can activate the power of Hell, which has the capability of taking over the earth (Nostradamus Scenario Project ed., 1994b: 23 and 31). The cloud also prevents God's light from permeating through to the earth, and a number of High Divine Angels discuss the crisis as the darkness increases. One of the leading angels says that once 90 per cent of the earth's surface is covered with the darkness, the Apocalypse is unavoidable (*ibid.*, 24). The angels go on to say that the Earth has never been covered by so many 'evil thoughts' before, and that the amount has already exceeded that which appeared at the end of the Atlantic civilisation (*ibid.*,



30).

In order to combat the darkness, the earth needs ‘Angels of Light’ or *Hikari no Tenshi* 光の天使 to increase the light and this mission is given to souls who start to prepare to be reincarnated from the Heavenly World onto Earth. At this point of the film, various teachings of Kofuku-no-Kagaku are introduced; for example, the Angels of Light choose the most appropriate life for them to lead, including the identity of their future parents. Some of the Angels fail to be born due to abortion (ibid., 55), illustrating the Movement’s ethical stance against abortion. The Archangels, of the 8<sup>th</sup> Dimensional Realm, congratulate each other on the fact that Mikhail Gorbachev has succeeded in dismantling the ‘Red Bear’ without recourse to war, and this generates light around Russia. At the same time, however, the film depicts the antagonism between the United States as the ‘Old Eagle’ and Iraq as a scorpion-like animal called ‘Behemoth’.<sup>4</sup>

Many Angels of Light are shown being sent into the worlds of politics, economics, science, art, education and religion (ibid., 61). After many Angels have been born, the film explains that the Grand Spirit El Cantare will soon join them on earth with a mission to overturn the darkness. At this point, once again, more of Kofuku-no-Kagaku’s doctrines are illustrated, including the danger involved in visiting popular spiritual mediums and psychics, the spiritual meaning of handicapped children, and the mechanism of the Apocalypse; various apocalyptic events that destroyed many civilisations in the past, are shown as the earth’s self-cleansing process (*jijō-sayō* 自浄作用), that resists ‘wrong’ thinking on earth (ibid., 78).

The High Divine Angels in the Heavenly World discuss the importance of creating new Angels of Light on earth, and they do this by awakening those now reincarnated on earth to their mission. This part of the dialogue is important, because it gives a powerful message of hope that anyone who is living on earth at this time can become an Angel of Light and can contribute to the grand salvation movement, as long as they become aware of their true mission by following the right teaching and practising it properly. The film goes on to show massive earthquakes hitting vast areas of land, such as Russia, Africa and Egypt. The Kremlin and the pyramids are destroyed, new diseases appear, a new totalitarian regime using the *Swastika* rises again, and major cities around the world are destroyed through natural disasters. The leading High Divine Angel then declares: ‘People, wake up! And ask your heart what you should do now’ (ibid., 108). People start to gather together to pray, but at the same time an

---

<sup>4</sup> For more details of the animals and other symbols that are employed to indicate certain countries, see: Nostradamus Scenario Project ed., 1994a: 48-9.



anonymous republic, referred to as 'North Asia' is shown preparing to launch a nuclear missile against Japan, the country in which the 'Saviour' now lives. The 'Pole Shift' that had been predicted by the High Divine Angels occurs and the axis of the Earth changes direction; terrible disasters occur but many people start to pray and the Republic fails to launch the missile. The film ends on a positive note when the leading Angel declares: 'Now an older civilisation ends and a new one will begin. However, whether or not humans can establish "The Age of the Sun" (*Taiyō no Jidai* 太陽の時代) depends on the love in the hearts of those of you who will live in the coming age' (ibid., 120-1).

Not long after the film was released, in January 1995, the terrible earthquake that hit Kobe and Osaka in western Japan killed over 6,000 people in January 1995, and Okawa once again addressed the subject of natural disasters that might occur in the near future.<sup>5</sup> Then the Aum Shinrikyō sarin gas attack on the Tokyo Underground followed only two months later in March. As the end of the Century approached, many members were again discussing the Apocalypse. Despite this, however, in 1996, the Movement went on to clearly shift away from discussions about an imminent Apocalypse. As I shall explain below (p.188), Okawa said this shift was necessary because too many people thinking about a negative future could actually make it happen. It also appears that the actions of Aum had made it necessary for the Movement to distinguish itself still further from other NRMs, and a new approach was prudent; I shall discuss this new approach in the next section. Before I do this, however, there are two distinct elements that I wish to consider, the first is Kofuku-no-Kagaku's and the issue of nationalism, the second is its criticism of those it sees as hindering the coming about of the Millennium.

### 7.3 Kofuku-no-Kagaku – The Issue of Nationalism and the Media

I mentioned above that Okawa predicted the arrival of the 'Golden Age of Japan' and 'Japan will be the "Jerusalem" and the "Mecca" of this modern world' (Okawa, 1993a: 36-7; 1995b: 324-5). As I shall discuss in the following chapter, Kofuku-no-Kagaku is not the only NRM to give Japan a special role both in the salvation of the present world and in the New World of the future. Cornille (2000) has addressed the somewhat contradictory nature of this nationalistic stance, as it seems to fit uncomfortably with the other common characteristic amongst many Japanese NRMs, their universalistic approach. This is true of Kofuku-no-Kagaku as well; as discussed in Chapter IV, its

---

<sup>5</sup> This public lecture, held on 5<sup>th</sup> February 1995, was entitled 'Living through the Miracle Age' or *Kiseki no Jidai o Ikiru* (Okawa, 1995g).



global appeal can be seen in its early eclectic approach, its use of European names for its women's divisions, such as Aphrodite, Florence Nightingale and Maria, and the English names of its projects, such as 'Sun Rise', 'Miracle', 'Big Bang' and 'New Hope'. It also uses the 'RO' symbol of the Roman alphabet, not the Japanese and the Movement's official monthly journals, sometimes carry photographs of European people and scenery.

Kofuku-no-Kagaku was specifically accused of being nationalistic during the early 1990s, particularly in relation to its worldview and future predictions that it published the three books 'The New Prophecies of Nostradamus' (first published in 1988), 'The Terrifying Revelations of Nostradamus' (1991) and 'The Great Warnings of Allah' (1991). The books contained many predictions concerning the near future, including calamities and wars as well as the heavenly mission of Kofuku-no-Kagaku.<sup>6</sup> Critics focused on Okawa's explicit messages of imminent catastrophe, but that Japan would have to be the centre of the world and provide hope for the future for the entire human race. Kofuku-no-Kagaku expressed obvious discomfort that some critics had treated what they saw as the nationalistic elements found in these books as the central and key doctrines of the Movement (See: Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly, No.88, 6/1994).

Shimazono, like Cornille, points out that various forms of nationalism have featured repeatedly in NRMs, especially in Shintō based movements (Shimazono, 2001: Chs.4-5); including the kind of nationalism that explicitly claims national superiority in a self-assertive manner (ibid., 128-37). Kofuku-no-Kagaku claims that El Cantare has descended on earth and is now going to overcome the differences between religions, countries and languages, and establish a global teaching based on Buddhism which will unite the world (Kofuku-no-Kagaku ed., 1994: 32-3), and it also claims that Japan was specifically chosen for this salvific mission (Okawa, 1994a: 278-80). In another example, Okawa said in his second ever public lecture, in 1987:

'The power of one person or two people cannot establish the Golden Age. In order to create the future history of humankind after 2000, tremendous power has to arise from Japan. We are here to turn the first cog (of the wheel). (Okawa, 1990b: 83)

Shimazono calls the tendency amongst Japanese NRMs to give Japan an active and leading role in humanity's future 'nationalism of Japan-ism' (*Nippon-kyō*

---

<sup>6</sup> 'The New Prophecies of Nostradamus: 1999 and the Advent of the Great Saviour' (JPN: *Nostradamus no Shin-yogen: 1999-nen to Dai-kyūseishu no Kōrin o Kataru*); 'The Terrifying Revelations of Nostradamus (*Nostradamus Senritsu no Keiji*)', and 'The Great Warnings of Allah (*Allah no Dai-keikoku*)'. All these titles are now out of print.



nationalism) or 'nationalism of the Japanese spirit' (*Nippon-seishin* nationalism) (Shimazono, 2001: 130-2). Cornille observes that this tendency 'might be in its historical and social context as a conservative reaction against the loss of identity, tradition and culture in the face of a threat of wholesale Westernisation' (Cornille, 2000: 29). She adds to this, however, that: 'The rapid economic recovery of Japan since the Second World War has, however, brought about a new self-confidence which has again fuelled the more triumphalistic kind of nationalism which may be found in Kofuku-no-Kagaku' (ibid., 29).

Kofuku-no-Kagaku denied the claim that it was nationalistic, as well as the view, held by some of its critics, that Nostradamus' revelations were its central doctrine. The Movement immediately published a counter criticism in its monthly journal (Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly, No.88, 6/1994: 76-8). This was still during its doctrinal reformation (1994), after which all the 'Minor Heaven' qualities were removed from discussion within Kofuku-no-Kagaku, and books featuring these qualities, including Nostradamus, were no longer printed.

From Kofuku-no-Kagaku's point of view, it also argued that it could not be nationalistic, because it explicitly teaches the spirit of Buddhism and the concept of reincarnation, which, it argued, are the polar opposite of the ideology of nationalism or elitism. This is because Buddhism teaches that anyone can attain enlightenment, and the idea of reincarnation means that a person has been reborn in many different countries with different racial origins throughout their past. The Movement claims that this gives people a global view, which eradicates nationalistic ideologies ('Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly', No.88, 6/1994: 62-3 and 77-8). This was not the first time that Kofuku-no-Kagaku had mentioned that an understanding of the concept of reincarnation is profoundly related to the creation of the global Utopia, as, back in 1990, it claimed that it did not matter what nationality you were (Kofuku-no-Kagaku ed., 1990: 87-8).

Although, Kofuku-no-Kagaku categorically denied the criticism that it was nationalistic, it is clear that this accusation would depend on the definition of the term 'nationalistic'. Kofuku-no-Kagaku was accused by some, including some academics of religious studies, of being 'ultra-nationalistic', militaristic and elitist; accusations that were accompanied by the claim that its ideas on Nostradamus were its central teachings. It is this rather popular definition of nationalism that was categorically denied by the Movement. However, some scholars, such as Shimazono, define nationalism as a belief that Japan is the centre of the world, and that Japanese spirituality is superior; that, for example, Japan has a great mission (Shimazono, 2001: 129). Kofuku-no-Kagaku does



display this belief as it teaches the significance of Japan and the Japanese people in relation to a special salvific mission, and Japan as the place where El Cantare, as the saviour of all humankind, has chosen to descend on earth (Okawa, 1993a: 65; 1994a: 279; 1994d: 17). An example can be seen from Okawa's declaration that the destiny of the 54 billion people on earth is now in the hands of the Japanese (Okawa, 1994a: 279).<sup>7</sup>

During his interview with the Financial Times (1991), Okawa admitted that Japan would be the centre of his 'activities of enlightenment', but also said that Japan was only the 'base' of these activities and that he was not nationalistic (Okawa, 1993a: 42-3). He also explained that he had predicted that other prophets would emerge in the future age, in places such as the United States, Britain, Indonesia and Australia (ibid., 44).

The discussion on nationalism has shown one aspect of Kofuku-no-Kagaku's relationship with its critics, another can be seen in its stance against anything in society it understands to hinder the coming about of the Millennium. Kofuku-no-Kagaku can be highly critical of anyone or anything that it believes to be spreading 'wrong' teachings or ideologies (see Chapter IV, p.81). For this reason, it has often criticised other new religions, such as Aum Shinrikyō, Soka Gakkai, and various practices such as magic, yoga and divination, when it understands them to be diverting people from their true salvific mission. It also criticises ideas such as atheism and materialism for the same reason (Okawa, 1995b: 74-77 and 114-119; 1994a: 298-300).

As discussed in Chapter IV, Kofuku-no-Kagaku has also been a severe critic of the media. According to the Movement, there are two kinds of malicious mass-media, the first it labels 'self-interested commercialism' *yokutoku-shōgyō-shugi no mass-comi* 欲得商業主義のマスコミ, and the second 'left-wing journalism' *sa-yoku journalism* 左翼ジャーナリズム. The first refers to those parts of the media that are only concerned with their own business climate. Kofuku-no-Kagaku considers Kōdansha to be typical of this type (Kofuku-no-Kagaku ed., 1994: 269), and has described this approach as the 'modern cult of Baal'<sup>8</sup> (*gendai no Baal shinkō* 現代のバアル信仰), and as the 'worship of money and faith in demons' (*haikin-shugi-teki akuma-shinkō* 拝金主義的悪魔信仰) (Okawa, 1994a: 298-9). In his very first public lecture, entitled 'The Principles of Happiness' on 8<sup>th</sup> March 1987, Okawa already referred to Elijah of the Old Testament (I

<sup>7</sup> Okawa said this in his speech entitled 'Creation of the New World', held during the first El Cantare Festival in December 1991.

<sup>8</sup> The use of 'Baal' came from the Old Testament's cult of Baal, which was denounced by the prophet Elijah, who upheld his monotheistic faith in one God, and competed against the 450 prophets of Baal to find out which God was the True God on Mount Carmel. According to the Bible, after winning in the contest, Elijah killed all the priests of Baal (See: 1 Kings 18:1-40).



Kings, Ch.18), who, as a prophet, had to challenge priests who followed the ‘wrong’ faith (Okawa, 1990b: 39-41) in the God of Baal. The fact that Kofuku-no-Kagaku labelled parts of the mass media as the ‘cult of Baal’ is significant, as it criticises self-interest and worship of money as deviations from authentic and what it considers to be ideal forms of religious faith. It also points to Okawa’s mission to raise the standard of the mass media as part of his utopia-creation project.

Okawa understands ‘left-wing journalism’ to be a ‘sanctuary of atheism and materialism’ *mushin-ron to yuibutsu-ron no gajō* 無神論と唯物論の牙城 (Okawa, 1994a: 298-9). According to the Movement, such a disposition or ideology gives rise to attachment to this-worldly things, such as desire for physical possessions and clinging to a physical life on earth. As discussed in Chapter IV, the ‘Revolution of Hope’ (1991) was designed to let, what it called, ‘true justice’ and the ‘value of faith’ permeate the whole world. Kofuku-no-Kagaku also explained the Revolution of Hope as a ‘conflict to establish a state in which people can talk freely about the ideals of the Buddha’, as well as a revolution to ‘change the consciousness of the people in Japan’ (Kofuku-no-Kagaku ed., 1994: 269). The Revolution of Hope, therefore, sheds considerable light on the Movement’s position in relation to the mass-media, which it considers irresponsible while wielding great power over society. This was not the first time that Kofuku-no-Kagaku had criticised the activities of the mass media, but after the autumn of 1991, when it entered a long ‘conflict’ with the publisher Kōdansha, the Movement clearly became more active in directly appealing to the public to help its cause, by engaging in various lawsuits, arranging protests and marching in city streets and holding public meetings.

From the point of view of the context of NRMs in Japan as a whole, Ishii observes that the negative image of NRMs can be attributed to the way in which they are depicted in the mass media (Ishii, 1997: 153). Kofuku-no-Kagaku’s hostility towards the mass media and especially its lawsuits against Kōdansha, could simply be seen as a way of fighting back against those who slandered Okawa and Kofuku-no-Kagaku, as discussed already in Chapter IV. However, Shimazono observes that the Movement’s attitude is not simply a result of Okawa’s defence against slander, but because it is Kofuku-no-Kagaku’s intention to achieve world transformation by criticising the mass media (Shimazono, 2001: 232-3).

The Movement’s active attitude to the Millennium must also be understood from the Buddhist teaching of cause and effect; it believes that in order to create the Ideal Society, it needs to create a positive present. The Utopia is not understood to arrive in a



passive sense, but is to be created actively and to achieve this, new value systems and a 'new common sense' are needed. In the preface to *The Laws of the Sun*, Okawa writes:

'The nature of this book is infinitely mystical. Do not try to rely upon your 'common sense' to comprehend it. Rather, I challenge you to transform your common sense with its contents. I sincerely wish that people who accept the content of this book as the new common sense, will become new leaders amid the political and economic chaos of the world, and will then be able to guide humanity towards true happiness'. (Okawa, 1996b: Preface)

I shall now consider Kofuku-no-Kagaku's new approach to the Apocalypse from 1996.

#### **7.4 Kofuku-no-Kagaku's Change in Emphasis Concerning the Apocalypse, 1996 to Present**

In June 1996 Okawa clearly illustrated Kofuku-no-Kagaku's new shift in emphasis concerning ideas about the Apocalypse when he talked of a new direction in his lecture 'The Heart that Believes in the Future' (*Mirai o Shinzuru Kokoro* 未来を信ずる心).<sup>9</sup> After this lecture, discussing or even thinking about the negative events that might occur in the near future was discouraged. In the lecture Okawa encouraged members who were anxious about the approach of the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, to think positively. He explained that a group of light-hearted people could attract a bright future (Okawa, 1998a: 14), while 'for those people who want to see some unhappy situations, unhappiness will materialise' (ibid., 20). Okawa indicated that when too many people are thinking too strongly about the same thing, it will only frighten people and might even trigger what they are frightened of to actually happen. Instead of worrying about it, people should now concentrate their everyday activities on the creation of a brighter future, through belief and a positive way of thinking, also stating that people should love their country and think about how they can improve it (ibid., 22-4).

The lecture could be said to mark a turning point for Kofuku-no-Kagaku from a religion that refers to cataclysm before the Utopia comes, to a religion that teaches about the future from a positive perspective, leaving virtually all discussion on the Apocalypse behind. Around this time Kofuku-no-Kagaku introduced a new ritual to prevent and overcome natural calamities (*Tempen-chii Chōfuku Kigan* 天変地異調伏祈願), in which the members took part with the understanding that they could spread 'light' around the area, region or even the country where their branch office was located. I had

---

<sup>9</sup> This lecture was held on 27<sup>th</sup> June 1996 for staff members, and shown to members in August 1996. For a transcription of the lecture see: Okawa, 1998a: Ch.1 and Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly, No.88, 9/1996: 38-40.



an opportunity to join this ritual with several other members. The rite was performed after a special prayer, and all the participants had to synchronise their actions in order to spread light across their area, in this case the United Kingdom and Europe. Sometimes these ritual sessions were held simultaneously across the globe in order to concentrate the light and make it more powerful. During my participant observation, some members told me that they believed that Kofuku-no-Kagaku's activities, the power of their faith and their love for the Lord El Cantare had penetrated across the world, and this must have prevented some of the calamities that were due to have occurred. In casual conversations I had with the members during this participation, some explained that they still thought misfortunes might occur in the future, while others thought they might not, but virtually all said they no longer dwelt on these questions at any length. Instead, they wanted to do what they could in their everyday lives that would eventually enable them to get closer to the establishment of the Utopia. From these discussions, it was clear that the members were becoming more positive about the future by following Kofuku-no-Kagaku's new direction.

I also discussed Kofuku-no-Kagaku's teachings on the Apocalypse at this time with a manager of the European Branch, Mr Tsuchida. I asked him, in particular, what was meant by *tempen chii* 天変地異 (upheaval events) and *seiki-matsu genshō* 世紀末現象 (events at the end of time), both expressions the Movement and its followers had used very frequently until around 1996. According to Mr Tsuchida:

'A new age and a new civilisation will be made up of a different value system from that of the past. For this reason, during the period between the old and the new civilisations, the old value system stops functioning. This is the symbolic understanding of upheavals in Kofuku-no-Kagaku.'<sup>10</sup>

Mr Tsuchida did not refer to any physical calamities or upheavals such as those described in the Bible or in some of Kofuku-no-Kagaku's own publications. This indicates a very distinctive view that Kofuku-no-Kagaku has on the Apocalypse, and this relates to its fundamental ideas, based on Buddhism, that the world operates according to the law of cause and effect, as mentioned above. According to this law, Mr Tsuchida explained, a utopian society does not come from nowhere:

'In some other new religions, people may believe that "The Kingdom of God will come after a sudden Apocalypse", but the question of "How then does it come about?" is very ambiguous. If the Utopia is a place or a time full of love and compassion, for example, it is then very important for us to establish

---

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Mr Tsuchida, London, 30th July 1997.



the activities based on love and compassion right now on earth, because everything exists in the sequence of “cause and effect”.<sup>11</sup>

He emphasised that a utopian society does not simply ‘arrive’ but must be ‘created’ by humans through the study and practice of the Buddha’s Truth. This, according to Mr Tsuchida, is the ‘polar opposite of various ideas of the Millennium advocated in many other NRMs’. I shall discuss this comparison further in Chapter VIII.

Mr Tsuchida also explained that membership does not guarantee salvation:

‘Even if you were a member, if you did not learn anything, for example, how to control your mind, then you would not really be saved. This is one of the differences between many other NRMs and Kofuku-no-Kagaku.’<sup>12</sup>

Mr Tainaka, a senior member of staff in Kofuku-no-Kagaku’s Headquarters (International Division) pointed out that because of the incorrect understanding of the Apocalypse and the Millennium, people were becoming extremely egotistic. He suggested that this misunderstanding had been caused by some occult books, on Nostradamus for example, which gave only frightening images of what might happen to our civilisation in the near future:

‘The followers of many movements, including the Seventhday Adventists Church, seem to believe in their automatic salvation at the Apocalypse in 1999 through faith, but they do not know the ‘mechanism’ of ‘why’ it occurs and ‘how’ they will be saved.’<sup>13</sup>

As Wallis’ typology of NRMs suggests, the so-called ‘world-rejecting’ type movements tend to claim that when all have become members or when they are a majority, then a new world order will begin (Wallis, 1984: 11). I mentioned above (p.179) that some movements, including Jehovah’s Witnesses, Seventhday Adventists and early Omoto, anticipated that survival of the Apocalypse was possible by becoming a good, pious member. In Kofuku-no-Kagaku, however, this is not the case.

Along with accusations of nationalism discussed above, some observers suggested that Kofuku-no-Kagaku became successful ‘by predicting a millennial Apocalypse from which Japan alone would survive’ (Kaplan and Marshall, 1996: 10). I questioned the European representative at this time, Mr Tsuchida, about this claim. According to him, what Kofuku-no-Kagaku attempted to do by predicting apocalyptic events was to issue a warning to the world. However: ‘this does not mean to say that

---

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Mr Tainaka, Tokyo, 17th May, 1997.



humans have to prepare for the catastrophe or that people will automatically be saved during or after the Apocalypse if they become members or something, unlike Omoto or Jehovah's Witnesses'.<sup>14</sup> He emphasised the Buddhist doctrine of the law of cause and effect, according to which cataclysmic events are caused by 'evil thoughts' and 'wrong doing':

'Apocalyptic disasters might come as long as human beings keep going in this way. Human beings are, therefore, responsible for the Apocalypse, and it is not the punishment of God or the Buddha. Hence the warning. It is the opportunity of awakening to the Truth or repentance for all of us. It is very important for people to realise what is going on now and what causes it.'<sup>15</sup>

To further emphasise this point, Mr Tsuchida went on to say: 'because everything is governed by the law of cause and effect, it is still possible to change the future by creating a different present'.<sup>16</sup> Mr Tsuchida also explained the initial emphasis Kofuku-no-Kagaku had placed on the apocalyptic element of its teachings:

'The teaching of the Apocalypse helps to encourage people's "repentance", or to use a more Buddhist term "self-reflection", to correct wrong minds, because wrong minds cause wrong actions, and more importantly they cause upheavals.'<sup>17</sup>

Mr Igata, Manager of the European Branch between 1999 and 2001, expressed a different view when he explained that the Movement spread its messages of love in order to stop such apocalyptic calamities.<sup>18</sup>

This reflects the Movement's shift away from the Apocalypse very clearly, and is something which can also be seen in a new term, 'The Age of the Sun', which has come to be used frequently by the Movement, especially since the beginning of 2000, to refer to the Utopian society. 'The Age of the Sun' is defined as the time or the future world in which 'the Truth and the sense of value, introduced in the book 'The Laws of the Sun', will have been spread to every corner of the world and will have become the main value' ('Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly', No.167, 1/2001: 3-4).<sup>19</sup> The foundation of the Age of the Sun is 'faith' with which billions of people in the world will be guided to take the right direction in life (ibid: 5). Along with faith, what is equally important is 'love'. In order to create the Utopia on Earth, 'give to others and think what you can do

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Mr Tsuchida, London, 30<sup>th</sup> July 1997.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Interview at Mr Igata, London, 27<sup>th</sup> September 2000.

<sup>19</sup> See: 'With Belief in the Arrival of the Age of the Sun' (*Taiyō-no-Jidai no Tōrai o Shinjite* 太陽の時代の到来を信じて) in 'Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly', Nos.167, 168 and 169 (1/2/3/2001).



for other people rather than what they can offer to do for you' ('Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly', No.168, 2/2001: 6-8). After 'faith' and 'love' comes 'thinking about enlightenment'; Okawa explains:

'What a human being can take back to the other world after death is only the heart/mind (*kokoro*); if you think about the soul only from a three dimensional point of view you will not comprehend this, you think about many things freely, don't you, and 'thinking' makes up who you are, it is this that continues to exist in the next world. Only 'thinking' or the 'function of thinking', goes back to the other world.' (ibid., 10)

It is this worldview of the centrality of thought that characterises the Millennium in Kofuku-no-Kagaku, and I shall now consider this in relation to the self-transformation that the members experience by analysing the data from the questionnaire survey and interviews.

## 7.5 Kofuku-no-Kagaku's Utopia Through Self-transformation

The term Utopia is frequently used by the members of the Movement because it is central to their mission. According to Okawa: 'The Utopia is the world where everybody can say "I am happy"' (Kofuku-no-Kagaku ed., 1994: 115). I have discussed the understanding of happiness in detail in Chapter V, (p.113-6), but to summarise here, one of the definitions of happiness within Kofuku-no-Kagaku is the state of knowing the Buddha's Truth and the wisdom one can attain when one puts it into practice. Being able to see the Truth is the happiness that Kofuku-no-Kagaku teaches, and, as the state of Enlightenment, which Shakyamuni the Buddha attained, is described as seeing things as they really are (Gombrich, 1988: 62), happiness in Kofuku-no-Kagaku is also identified with enlightenment (Kofuku-no-Kagaku ed., 1994: 115). Okawa's view on human happiness, as well as on the concepts of Heaven and Hell, are very important concepts in Kofuku-no-Kagaku because they are directly related to the teachings of how to deal with the laws of the mind (*kokoro no hōsoku* 心の法則). The explanations of how the mind works in relation to happiness are, therefore, vital elements of Kofuku-no-Kagaku's doctrine for observers to bear in mind in order to grasp its ideas concerning the Millennium.

Okawa also teaches that human happiness consists of two elements: one is found in self-contentment or with finding satisfaction in what one already has; the other is found in the more active element of 'progress' and 'development', and these two function 'like a brake and an accelerator' (Okawa, 1997a: 12). Okawa goes on to explain that humans want to be happy because of '*tamashii no uzuki*' 魂のうずき or the



‘throb of the soul’ (ibid., 15). By this he means that human souls seek calmness or peace of mind, and at the same time desire progress, both of which originate from the Eternal Buddha’s ideals (ibid., 15-7). ‘Progress’ and ‘harmony’ have been the two objectives for humankind since, what Kofuku-no-Kagaku calls, the Primordial Buddha created the Universe (ibid., 16).

When ‘happiness’ has been attained, what has really changed is not the outside world but a person’s heart/mind, and when the whole world is filled with people who have achieved this self-transformation, that is when Kofuku-no-Kagaku’s ‘Buddha-land Utopia’ will come about. As Okawa states: ‘putting all of them together makes this world on earth a Buddha-land, and an Ideal World’ (Okawa, 1993a: 93; 1995a: 68). Whilst ‘everyone’ is included in the Movement’s concept of the Utopia, happiness is not understood to affect everyone simultaneously; this makes an interesting comparison with Cohn’s definition of the Millennium as collective, because Kofuku-no-Kagaku’s Utopia is also collective, but only after each and every individual has realised it for themselves. Similarly, while the individual utopia can be understood as a complete transformation of the heart/mind of each individual, this can be contrasted to some extent with Cohn’s definition of the Millennium as total, as it does not affect the whole of society simultaneously. It may also be argued that Kofuku-no-Kagaku’s Utopia is a period of time rather than some extraordinary world.

Whilst stress remains on self-transformation, the Movement does not neglect the importance of society; one point that people have to bear in mind when they pursue their own happiness, according to Okawa, is that they have to maintain the harmony of the group at the same time (Okawa, 1997a: 13). This means that one who is in pursuit of his or her own happiness, but indifferent to other people’s, is not considered to be practising the teaching of the Movement; therefore transfer of the ‘happiness of the individual’ to the ‘happiness of society’, is something that each follower of the Movement must be aware of. Okawa is insisting on the importance of harmony, a virtue that Japanese teachers have insisted on for centuries.

#### *Results of questionnaire survey and interviews*

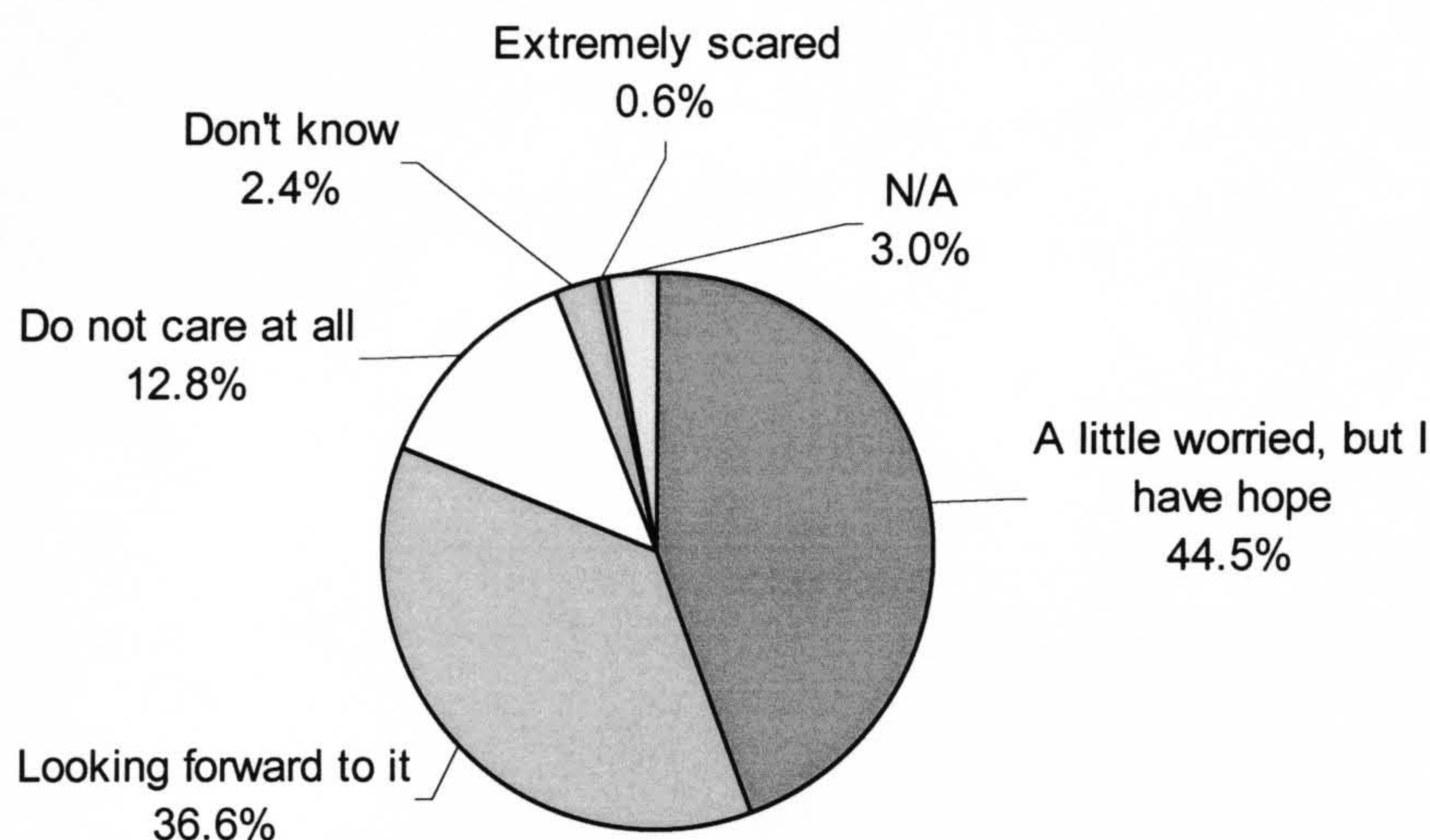
During my fieldwork, an important part of my research was to address the question of millenarian and apocalyptic ideas amongst the members of Kofuku-no-Kagaku. In my questionnaire survey and interviews, I asked members if they had any views about the approaching end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and the various predictions made about this time. I deliberately chose the end of 1998 and early 1999 to do this particular part of my



fieldwork because of the significance of the year 1999, and its association with the Apocalypse, not just because of Okawa's earlier predictions, but because of the 'Nostradamus boom', started by the author Ben Goto in the 1970s. Despite its clear shift away from the Apocalypse by 1996, discussions about 1999 were still taking place amongst the members.

From the chart below it is possible to see that 44.5 per cent of all questionnaire respondents admitted that they were a little worried but had hope concerning the near future.

**Chart 18. Pie chart illustrating concern about the future, especially around 1999**



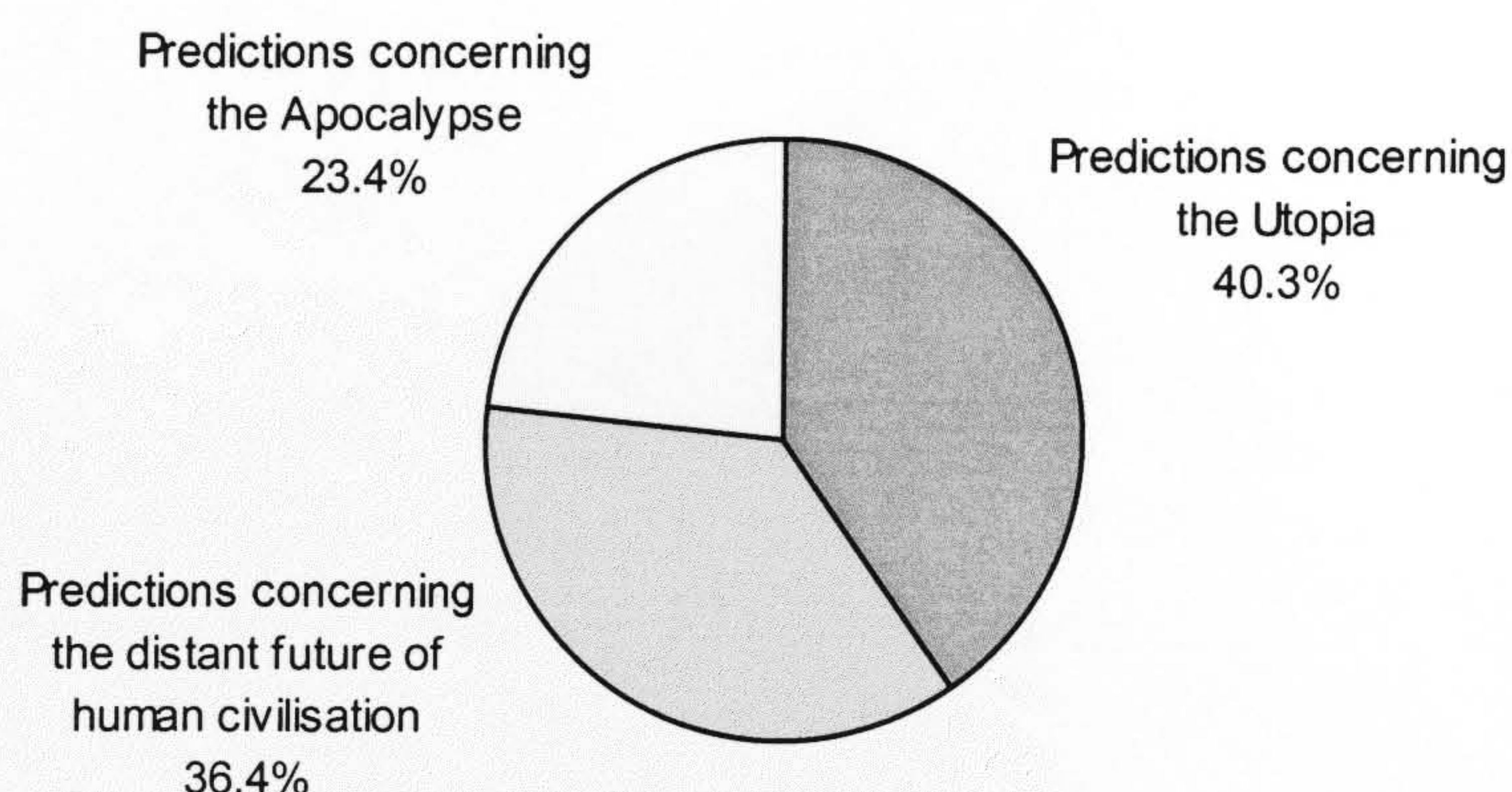
The next highest figure of 36.6 per cent claimed they were actually looking forward to the near future. The third response, 'I don't care about it at all', was chosen by 12.8 per cent, while 2.4 per cent said 'I don't know'. It should be noted that those who claimed to be 'extremely scared' about the future were only 0.6 per cent of the respondents. It seems clear from these figures that a clear majority (81%) are expressing some level of optimism about the future; this appears to be reflecting the emphasis the Movement has placed on a positive future since 1996, but at the same time, nearly half the members still have a certain amount of anxiety about the future, too.

As discussed in Chapter VI (p.170-1), the three most popular reasons for joining Kofuku-no-Kagaku were: 'to develop, improve and transform myself' (40.2%); 'to pursue the meaning of life' (28.7%); and 'I was searching for something/answers' (27.4%). The survey results show that 'self-transformation' was the main concern for most members, and as discussed, this is directly related to the methodology of obtaining true happiness at a personal level, and is equally significant for the creation of the Millennium on a societal level.



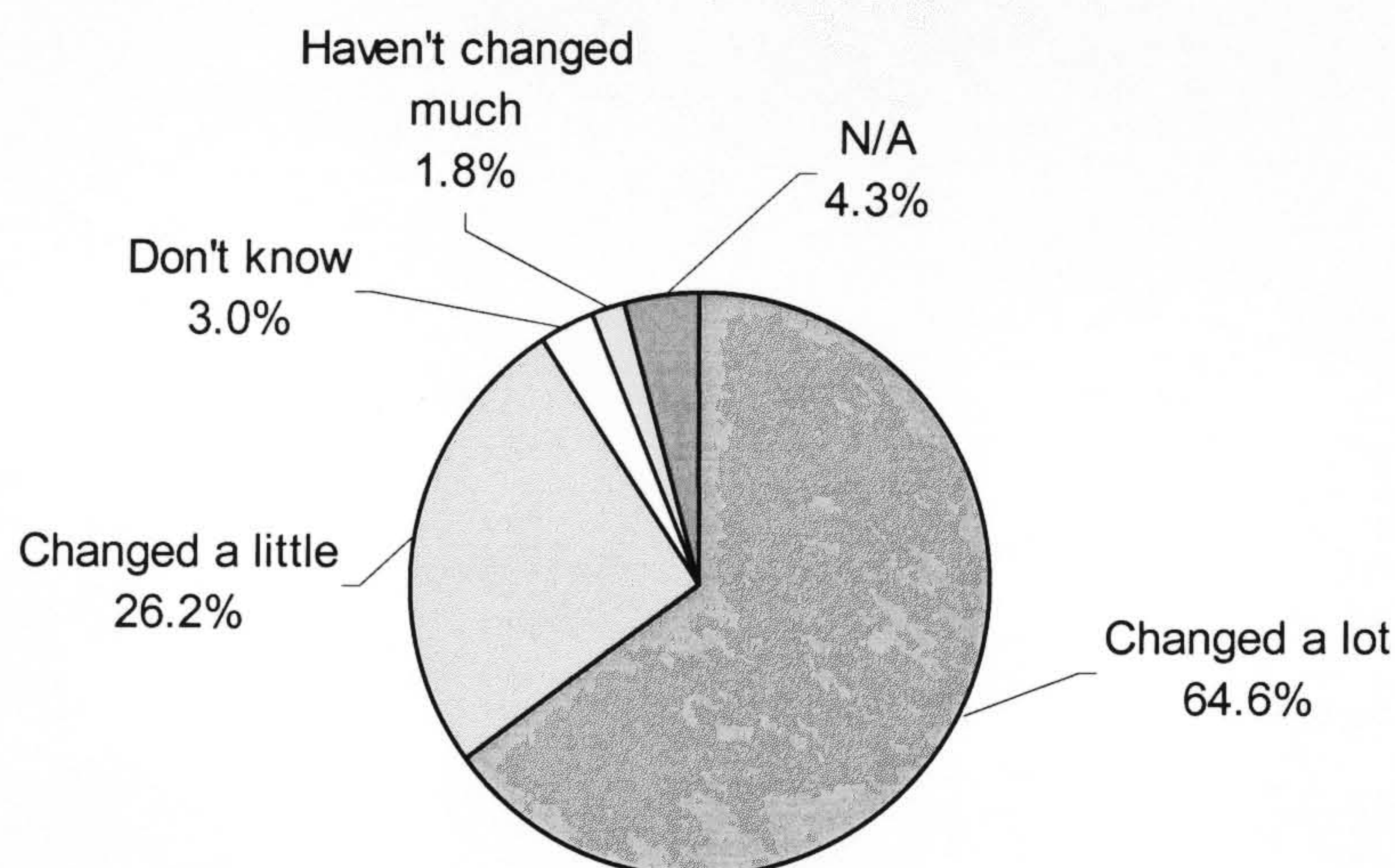
The data also revealed that 37.8 per cent of members considered predictions to be an attractive feature of the Movement (p.174-5). The figures below also clearly show that predictions concerning the Utopia which is to be established soon, are more significant for members than predictions concerning either the distant future of humanity or the Apocalypse.

**Chart 19. Pie chart illustrating popularity of predictions**



In relation to the question concerning the chance 'to develop, improve and transform' the results also show that almost 90 per cent of the members illustrated in Chart 20 below, consider that they are changing, and that they see themselves as benefiting from their affiliation to the Movement.

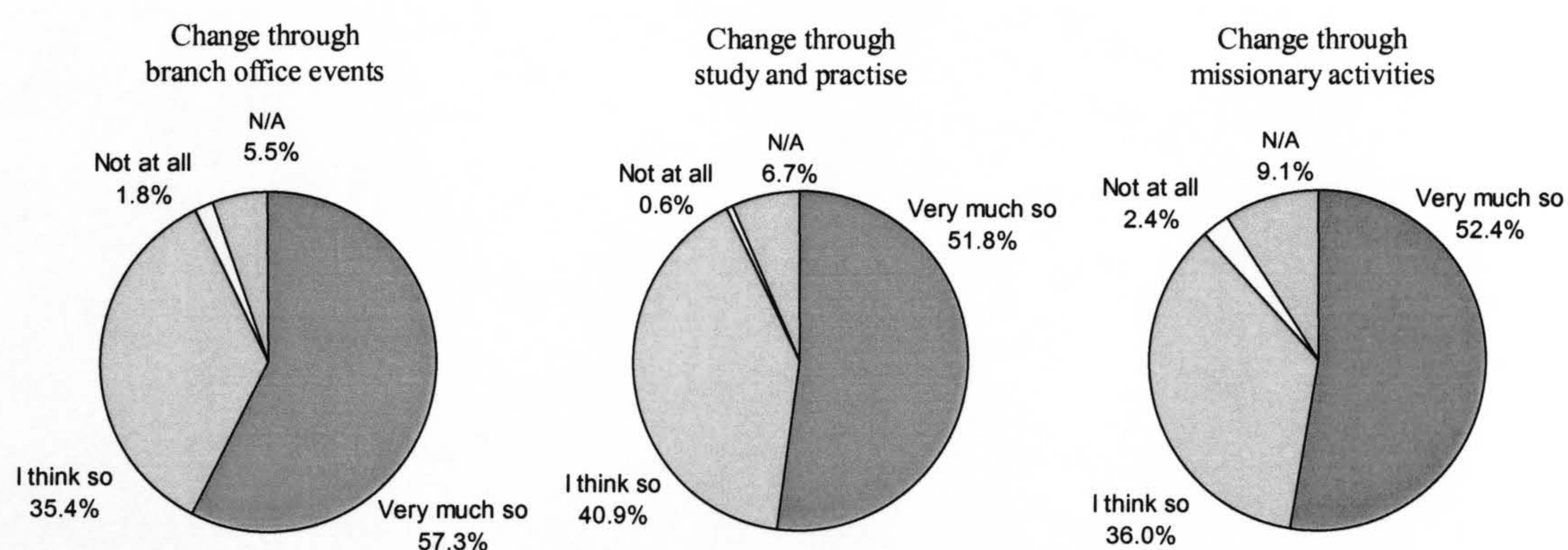
**Chart 20. Pie chart illustrating how much members consider they have transformed through their affiliation to Kofuku-no-Kagaku**



I also divided members' development or transformation into four separate categories, first, through branch office events; second, missionary work; third, studying and practising the doctrine; and fourth, the religious training provided by the Movement at its temples and retreat centres. In the first three categories the results were fairly consistent.

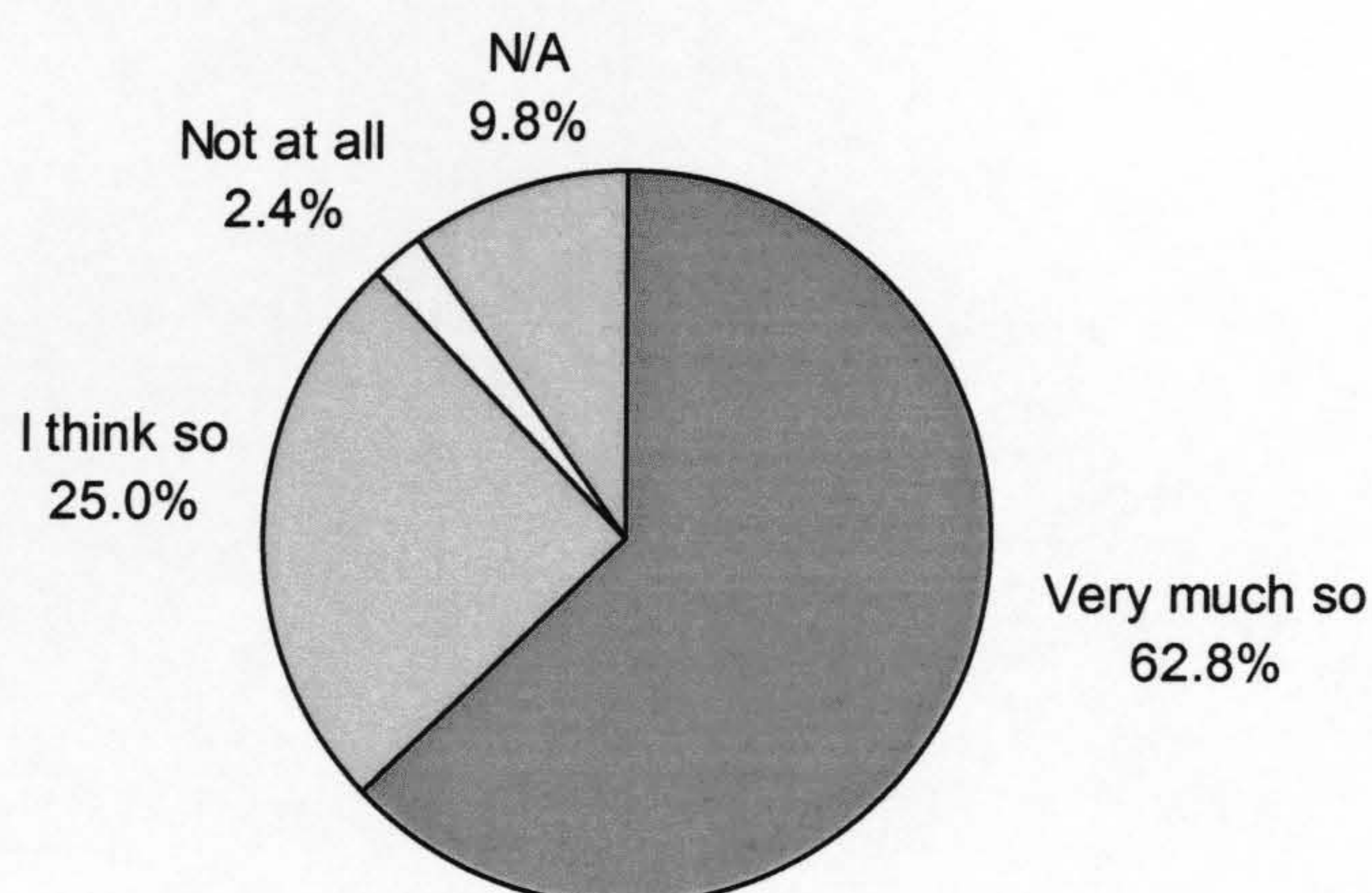


**Chart 21. Pie chart illustrating how much members consider they have transformed in relation to specific activities in Kofuku-no-Kagaku**



The figures for the last category, developing through the religious training provided by Kofuku-no-Kagaku at its temples were the highest.

**Chart 22. Pie chart illustrating how much members consider they have transformed in relation to training provided at Kofuku-no-Kagaku's temples/retreat centres**



This is significant, because this training is a relatively new activity that began in 1996, when Kofuku-no-Kagaku's first major temple was constructed. These results coincide with the Movement's shift in emphasis away from the Apocalypse and towards a more positive future that it was actively preparing for. In a related question, a large proportion of the respondents, 79.9 per cent, also considered that the development of Kofuku-no-Kagaku is directly related to the religious training that the Movement offers at its major temples.

It appears that around this time, and in contrast to 1991 when the Movement's apocalyptic message was at its height, Kofuku-no-Kagaku had less appeal to new members, as the membership figures suggest numbers were levelling out (illustrated on p.137). However, one of the things that interested me after the shift was that many existing members still seemed very keen about the Movement's activities, including its missionary work, despite the fact that the sense of imminence that the apocalyptic



warnings had previously generated was no longer present. This was equally true when the 21st Century and the new millennium began; through my participant observation I noticed that the core members remained very serious and keen about studying the doctrine, their missionary work and establishing the Utopia.<sup>20</sup> When I met Mr Yuki Oikawa, Head of the International Division, in 2001, I therefore asked him: ‘After the year 2000, what, if anything, has kept the members eager about their missionary work and about the creation of the Utopia?’ Mr Oikawa replied that the religious experiences provided at the Movement’s temples had been the main reason why the members had remained active since 1996, particularly after Master Okawa’s lecture entitled ‘The Heart that Believes in the Future’ in June 1996. Mr Oikawa continued:

‘During the early years, there was a common view amongst members that some cataclysmic events were approaching in the near future, and they had to be prevented. It is true that such an expectation was in a way functioning as a ‘driving force’ for the members to actively engage in missionary work. However, such motivation and the nervous mood that accompanied it, which was caused by a rather intimidating future, has completely disappeared. Before 1996, Kofuku-no-Kagaku managed to achieve ‘dynamic development’, and our Institute thus had conspicuous elements, such as holding a number of large events, such as Birthday Festivals at Tokyo Dome, often declaring the size of the membership, which was rapidly expanding, as well as talking about apocalyptic prophecy. However, such, what I would call, ‘dynamic development’ has completely shifted and become a more ‘spiritual development’, because our Institute has now entered a stable phase (after 1998), and for this reason our Institute no longer needs to deploy such ‘flashy’ activities.’<sup>21</sup>

Mr Oikawa claims that 1996 was the ‘year of the great shift’ (*dai-henkan no toshi* 大変換の年) for Kofuku-no-Kagaku from what used to be a religious movement that had some tension and ‘acute elements’, to a stable religion that aims to achieve spiritual development. As a result, especially from 1998, Kofuku-no-Kagaku’s main appeal to the outside world is the religious experiences it provides at its temples, such as a systematic meditation program and self-reflection practices, often with many other attendees, and through which many claim that they have achieved religious experiences. Kofuku-no-Kagaku’s monthly journals often carry the comments of the participants of the religious practices held at its temples; for example some visitors claim that they have managed to understand the true feelings of their late parents who brought them up;

<sup>20</sup> The core members (*jisshitsu shinja* 実質信者 or *chūshin member* 中心メンバー) are those who strongly identify themselves with their affiliation to Kofuku-no-Kagaku and make a substantial contribution to it in respect of studying the teachings, attending different sessions and taking part in voluntary activities in the branch offices, distributing its publications, doing missionary work and making donations.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Mr Oikawa, Tokyo, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> December 2001.



some claim that they have received a tremendous amount of divine light during meditation and realised how much they are loved by the Buddha and other people; and some say they have gained a great amount of confidence and self-esteem through an encounter with their guardian spirits. Mr Oikawa also explained that missionary work is now focused on these religious experiences; members invite friends to the temples so they can experience a religious state.<sup>22</sup> I shall now consider the millenarian and apocalyptic ideas of Kofuku-no-Kagaku in relation to the more detailed responses of the members.

In an interview, one member, a man in his early 30s, who was a married civil servant with young children, explained his understanding of the Utopia as follows:

‘I don’t feel anything concrete when I hear the word “utopia” to be honest. But when I first encountered Kofuku-no-Kagaku I immediately realised “This is the Truth. This is definitely right”, so I thought I needed to spread this Truth to everybody. The conviction that “I know what the Truth is” gave me a tremendous amount of courage and confidence. For example, various sufferings and anxieties, the meaning of life, the secret of the universe, the world after death, and what God really meant – everything became clear. I then realised how much I, others and the whole world were completely loved by God. This was when, for the first time, I learned how to like myself and love everything else in the world. My self-esteem had been low before this realisation. I felt complete happiness from the bottom of my heart, and that was when I felt I was saved! I also realised how far this world and the heart of the people who live in this world were from the Real World, and how much God must have been upset about that. As someone who was saved by the Lord, I just had to let other people know the Truth and share my own moving experience. I thought “I want to help the Lord and reduce His sorrow about the present state of the world”; this was to me what I was born to do, this was the meaning of life and this was my only true task. Looking back, I think this was my ‘calling’. Encountering the Truth and knowing the Truth is a gigantic miracle, because it has the power to make anybody happy, including me. So there is no Utopia without knowing the undeniable and solemn Truth. The Utopia is the world where happy individuals gather, so the first condition to achieve this is that the Truth must become ‘common sense’ and shared by the whole world. In other words, the Truth should be known and accepted by the entire world. If we can do that, in my view, this must be the state of the Utopian World.

I have no idea how I will feel when the Utopia is established, but in order to create such a world in the future, I am working with Kofuku-no-Kagaku every day, feeling a lot of joy and sometimes feeling that it is hard work. Although I say it myself, I guess I’m doing pretty well in my activities for the Movement. I feel I am because I also feel that my soul is happy with what I am doing, in other words, I’m carrying out my mission correctly. If I were to actually describe what the Utopia would be like, I believe it is a world full of people whose hearts are filled with harmony, in other words, they know the Truth or are working hard to know the Truth.’ (IRH30)

---

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.



A woman in her thirties, a graduate working as a secretary, explained that she had understood the Movement's apocalyptic elements symbolically:

'I don't think I ever took very well to the terrible happenings that were presented in the Nostradamus film, for example, so it was a relief to me when the Movement placed more emphasis on thinking positively about the future; I think I always took it to be more symbolic than literal. I hope I'm not too far off line when I say this, but I think we can take impending problems as a wake up call to sort ourselves out, and realise how far we are from creating a better, Ideal World. With the idea of cause and effect I now understand that what I do makes a huge difference in the future, and that if we work hard now, we can be optimistic about a better future.

I think I would understand the Utopia to be a place where everyone reaches a state of mind where they have full control over how they think and behave and can constantly give out Buddha's love. Where hang-ups and emotional blockages are a thing of the past, and we can all relate to each other honestly and without hidden agendas. It can also mean those brief moments of clarity, when one sees things in that way on a personal level too, without all the mess that clutters the mind.' (IRH15)

She also explained how the teachings have helped her to change:

'I have more control over my mind, I feel more confident about the meaning of my life, although I sometimes wish I could translate this more than I do into my day to day life. That has changed, but I still lack the courage that I feel complete trust in the teachings should give me.

The thing I love about the teachings is that I feel I have a role to play in my own self-development, and in my own small way, the development of the Movement and even society itself, through things like self-reflection and working together. Happiness was always something I depended on others to bring me, but now I know it comes from within – or rather from the Buddha, and that is a limitless thing.' (IRH15)

A woman in her mid 40s, who was a housewife, was extremely optimistic about the future and felt that the teachings had given her the opportunity to change by bringing happiness into her life. She felt this happiness: 'Every second of my everyday life, and particularly when I am praying and talking with my friends in Kofuku-no-Kagaku' (IRH11). She felt that the happiness she had gained had come from the realisation that she had a specific purpose and mission in her life, both to develop her soul and to create the Utopia.

A 26-year-old female said:

'I feel I have changed a lot, and I feel I am changing most through Kofuku-no-Kagaku's various activities. I can love others more than ever, and because I now know life is not only limited to this world, I can live my life giving love as much as I can.

Through my membership I feel a great sense of happiness when I realise that I have got other friends who share the same thoughts that I do; that we want everyone to be happy one day. This Movement is a true



teaching, so I want all living beings to know about it and then we can realise the Utopia.’ (IRH25)

A man in his late 40s explained that he changed a lot after he encountered Kofuku-no-Kagaku’s teachings, and had come to understand the reason for life; this gave him the sense that he was living a positive life. He clearly saw a link between his own self-transformation and the Utopia: ‘On the way to Kofuku-no-Kagaku becoming a world religion<sup>23</sup>, I am able to contribute both to the enlightenment of the world and to my own enlightenment’ (IRH10).

A married woman in her late 30s, a graduate who was self-employed and joined in the late 1980s, explained that although her environment was not full of hardship, she had only found happiness when she learned to change the way she looked at her life. By learning to become more tolerant and patient she had learned to appreciate what she had. The Utopia for her was learning to deepen her happiness or enlightenment, and to come as close to the Buddha as possible so that she could contribute to a happier future for everyone (IRH3).

A housewife in her mid 40s, who joined in 1989 and had no previous faith before she joined the Movement, felt she changed a great deal when she realised the interdependence of all things:

‘The outside world and I are one and the same thing, which means that I am now able to forgive others. Everything around me, everybody, every animal and even plants around me are related to me because of our interdependence, and this means I can love all of them.’ (IRH21)

This understanding, which clearly illustrates how self-transformation leads to a concrete change in society itself, put her problems into perspective, she explained, in the following way:

‘Now I have discovered that I am living my life with challenges I feel a great sense of happiness: whatever problems occur I am no longer anxious or scared, and I regard them as my own ‘life questions’ or my own ‘personal exam questions’. This has meant that I can accept everything that life throws at me as I know it is for the development of my own soul.’ (IRH21)

A married woman in her early 30s, who joined the Movement in the mid 1990s, explained that she was very positive about the future:

---

<sup>23</sup> Several members used this term ‘world religion’ (*sekai shūkyō*) to describe Kofuku-no-Kagaku’s future. It was unclear whether this meant a world religion, along with, say Christianity, Buddhism or Islam, or ‘the’ world religion, meaning the only world religion. When I asked about this, most explained that ‘world religion’ meant when everyone shares the same faith in Kofuku-no-Kagaku. This also makes me speculate that what they are referring to is probably the arrival of the Utopia.



‘Change for me came when I realised Kofuku-no-Kagaku’s teachings on the importance of giving love, and learned that love is not give and take but give and give ..... My happiness has developed through meditation sessions and missionary work in particular, and I am full of joy when my self-reflection helps me realise a lot about myself. My faith also gives me a strong feeling of happiness ..... I am very hopeful about the future, and feel that this hope is a very important part of my life now, as it gives me the opportunity to help create Lord El Cantare’s world on earth. I think I understand this world to be where others can experience the Truth I have experienced, and feel the happiness it has given me.’ (IRH6)

A married man in his late 40s, a professional who had been a member since the late 1980s, only felt that he had changed a little, but that he had become more considerate of others and less selfish. He also explained:

‘I sometimes feel it is difficult to keep up with the expansion of the Movement, and that this makes it difficult to see the whole picture of the teachings sometimes. On the other hand, I have a strong sense that the activities organised by the Movement allow me to contribute to its development, as well as my own, and this gives me a sense of satisfaction nonetheless.’ (IRH20)

A married woman in her early 40s, who joined the Movement in the early 1990s, spoke of her extremely positive feelings about the near future and beyond. She had no religious interest before joining the Movement and was introduced by a friend because she was having problems both with relationships and with illness. She explained that she felt she had changed a great deal since she joined: ‘I used to be able to think only about myself, but after I had studied the concept of giving love, I realised that this was the key to my happiness’ (IRH4). She spoke particularly of the happiness she experienced when she visited the Movement’s temples, as well as the mission that the teachings on the Utopia had given her:

‘I want this teaching to be known by many people in the world, as soon as possible, so that everyone can become happy, and I will endeavour to make every effort I can to help bring this about.’ (IRH4)

A self-employed graduate, a woman in her mid 40s who joined in the early 1990s, spoke about her decision to join the Movement:

‘My decision to join was entirely based on reading the ‘Laws of the Sun’ and the ‘Essence of the Buddha’ – I was looking for something that would help me develop my personality and felt that I had found this in Master Okawa’s writings. I am a little anxious about the future, I was initially extremely interested in Kofuku-no-Kagaku’s predictions, both in relation to the Apocalypse and its ideas concerning far distant future civilisations.’ (IRH5)

She felt she had changed a lot as faith had become central to her life, and



believed the Utopia to be:

‘When Master Okawa’s teachings have permeated the whole world and people across the world become happy, then it will become the Bodhisattva World.’ (IRH5)

A single woman in her early 20s, who joined the Movement in the late 1990s, explained her self-transformation as follows:

‘Even though something may happen I feel very confident that what I am doing within Kofuku-no-Kagaku, such as polishing my mind and supporting this Movement’s missionary activities, will make a big difference to the future. I am very happy to make whatever contribution I can to the future happiness in the world.

I feel I have changed a lot since I joined, and have become a lot more gentle towards others – I am also able to think about things from many different perspectives with the help of self-reflection.’ (IRH13)

A man in his late 20s, talked of the happiness the Movement had given him:

‘I always felt there was something missing in my life and I had no direction. Once I had read the ‘Laws of the Sun’, however, I felt that all the ‘life questions’ I had been carrying around with me, such as where am I from and where will I go when I die?, had been solved immediately - I am now convinced that anyone can create the whole world with just “one” thought, whether this be hell or heaven. We have got freedom to choose this, and now we are learning what is good and what is bad. I’m trying to make an effort to do what is good. Today, for example, I didn’t do what I thought was wrong and I was able to achieve this because I am guided by the quest for the “Right Mind”! I found myself very happy about this ..... I think I am changing a lot. I used to think that things had to change in the outside world in order for me to change myself, but now I realise that the opposite is true ..... I want to share my happiness with everybody. Instead of enjoying this feeling by myself, I would like to share it. I would also like to practise how to get this feeling into my everyday life, and lead others to it too.’ (IRH14)

If millenarian ideas are essentially about change, as Clarke observes (Clarke, 2000: 130), and as I have discussed in Chapter II (p.36), it appears from the results of the questionnaire, as well as the interviews, that the teachings of the Movement are very much bringing about self-transformation for members. Many members in the questionnaire claimed that they had become calm or calmer, for example. Others said they had started to think about things more deeply, and many others said they had become gentle, kind, kind-hearted and tender as well as light-hearted. This means that many members, at least at one point in their lives, must have been suffering from hard to control emotions such as anger, fury, frustration, jealousy, grief and hatred. They talk of becoming able to control their minds, and of cultivating tranquillity through the various beliefs and practices in Kofuku-no-Kagaku, which is what Okawa says is one of the meanings of happiness. He says, for example, that one should become the ruler of



the kingdom of one's heart/mind, and he also explains that the heart/mind that is like the surface of a calm lake is a form of happiness. Many also, like IRH11 and IRH25 above, mentioned that they find happiness when they are talking to their 'dharma friends' (*hōyū* 法友), and this is probably because they can share the same sense of values together, and the common purpose based on a shared spirituality.

The members' detailed responses given above provide further evidence of this. IRH3 only found happiness when she learned to change the way she looked at her life, and IRH21 explained that the point of change for her was when she understood the interdependence of things: 'I changed when I realised that the outside world and I are one and the same thing, which means that I am now able to forgive others' (IRH21).

What a look at the millenarianism of Kofuku-no-Kagaku therefore isolates is that people are seeking change, just as they have in cases of millenarianism in the past. Rather than seeking change in a physical sense, however, in the form of power or money, they are seeking change through self-transformation. It is also clear, however, that this self-transformation is understood to be related to bringing about transformation for the whole of society in the form of the Utopia, and this can clearly be observed in the responses of IRH5, IRH10, IRH13 and particularly IRH21 detailed above, for example.

In order for the creation of the Ideal World to appeal to people, it follows that they find their current situation unsatisfactory, if not in a state of crisis. The discussions in Chapter II on millenarian literature have demonstrated that again and again, millenarianism comes about as a result of some kind of dissatisfaction or deprivation, and where those suffering from the deprivation do not have conventional means at their disposal to change their situation. In Chapter II, I also discussed the fact that a consideration of the contexts that have given rise to millenarianism presented a complex picture, and that although it was often born out of poverty and social anomie, it is possible for millenarianism to arise in societies that are not economically or politically deprived. Glock and Stark (1971) have offered a very interesting analysis on the question of deprivation, pointing out that it should be understood to be relative and experienced subjectively. They posit five forms of deprivation to explain this, namely, economic, social, organismic, psychic and ethical.<sup>24</sup>

Like many other new religions in Japan, Kofuku-no-Kagaku understands the modern world to be in a state of 'crisis' (Okawa, 1993a: 38). The social context in post-modern Japan, and the results of my research show that it is certainly not economic

---

<sup>24</sup> See: Glock and Stark, 1971: 246-8



deprivation that is making members of Kofuku-no-Kagaku turn to ideas of building a new utopian society. The physical world is not the point of change here, although, as mentioned above, the physical world is understood to change once individuals have changed. The dissatisfaction that members of Kofuku-no-Kagaku are experiencing, according to my research, very much relates to the meaning of life, peace of mind, and primarily, a search for true happiness. This can be seen in IRH30's comments: 'various sufferings and anxieties, the meaning of life, the secret of the universe, the world after death, and what God really meant – everything became clear' (IRH30). With this knowledge he explained that he reversed his low esteem and gained courage and confidence, and significantly: 'I felt complete happiness from the bottom of my heart, and that was when I felt I was saved!' (IRH30). IRH21 pointed out that the teachings had given meaning to the challenges in her life, and that this had removed her anxiety and fear. IRH14 spoke of his dissatisfaction in terms of something missing in his life, and that he lacked direction.

In post-modern Japan, the problem, as Blacker has pointed out, appears to be 'simply, and a little undramatically, "wrong-thinking"' (Blacker, 1971: 598), but while Blacker refers to this as simple and a little undramatic, one explanation as to why millenarianism is such a powerful symbol for new religions in post-modern Japan is perhaps that 'wrong-thinking' is, by its very nature, not easily rectified by conventional means. Where the members of 'new' new religions are not powerless in relation to status, political voice or economic prosperity, the values of modern society appear to have failed to provide them with any profound meaning or power in relation to the state of their minds. The millenarian ideas of Kofuku-no-Kagaku have offered many such people with something the conventional rules of society have not. Again, members explanations concerning their change provided evidence of this. For example, one member explained the importance of Kofuku-no-Kagaku's alternative teachings on love in relation to her own change: 'Change for me came when I realised Kofuku-no-Kagaku's teachings on the importance of giving love, and I learned that love is not give and take but give and give' (IRH6). Another member illustrated this when he isolated the following contrast between what could be argued to be conventional wisdom and that offered by Kofuku-no-Kagaku when he said: 'I used to think that things had to change in the outside world in order for me to change myself, but now I realise that the opposite is true' (IRH14).

Is this dissatisfaction, characterised by wrong thinking, best described by one of the five deprivations posited by Glock and Stark such as psychic deprivation, however,



or is there some new type of deprivation here that might better be described by the term 'spiritual deprivation', for example? It is perhaps significant that the prevailing society in Japan has a difficult relationship with religion. After the Second World War, as a result of Shintō's involvement in the political scene that took the country to war, the Japanese constitution no longer refers to religious matters. Those who join new religions such as Kofuku-no-Kagaku, however, are displaying a need to change the way they understand the world, and finding the answer in values such as love, prayer, reincarnation, self-reflection, spiritual development and the power of thought. For example, 54 per cent of the Japanese still consider that they need some supernatural figure to rely on to support their mental well being (Ishii, 1997: 47). Although it is also the case that only 26 per cent of the Japanese claim to believe in religion, 72 per cent say holding a religious heart/mind is important (*ibid.*, 7). As discussed in Chapter II, it appears that millenarianism empowers people who need a voice to express something that the prevailing authority is not giving them room to express, in the case of Kofuku-no-Kagaku the evidence from my research suggests that this is their need to find happiness through a spiritual identity. Barker points out that it has been very difficult for seekers in modern society to find an opportunity to ask these kinds of questions because of the risk of being thought of as a 'bit peculiar' (Barker, 1989: 134). It is also the case that it is not too easy or common for people who have had religious and mystical experiences to express their experiences in public, and Barker points out that NRMs provide a safe environment for people to reveal and discuss their experiences (*ibid.*, 30). In Kofuku-no-Kagaku, discussions on religious experiences are taking place frequently, as a matter of course, and the emphasis on the experiences in the Movement's temples are increasing their importance.

Kofuku-no-Kagaku also provides answers to religious questions in direct language in the doctrine, as I have discussed in particular in Chapter V. For example, Okawa teaches that humans were not born accidentally on earth, but have eternal lives and are meant to train, polish and develop their souls in the process of reincarnation in one life after another in order to eventually create the Buddha-land Utopia. The fundamental purpose of human life that he teaches, namely 'soul-training' leading to the 'establishment of the Utopia' (Kofuku-no-Kagaku ed., 1994: 197) is explained according to this worldview. Moreover, Okawa adds in later teachings on this point that the supreme mission of humankind is to let the Planet Earth evolve, develop and harmonise in the best possible form (Okawa, 1997: 20). My research reveals what an important role this mission plays in the lives of some members.



There is another element that the deprivation issue raises, and that is the possible deprivation created by religious ideology itself, be that deliberate or not. When a religion puts forward the image of an ideal world, which includes the description of a state of mind which is 100 per cent perfect, anything that is compared to that image is automatically going to feel inferior. The ideology itself makes individuals feel they are lacking something and once someone realises they are, in fact, deprived they need to remove that feeling. Kofuku-no-Kagaku teaches that everyone has a Buddha Nature within, or the potential to attain happiness, described in terms of a rough diamond which has the potential to shine brilliantly when it is polished. In other words, everyone already has this quality, they just have to let it shine through. In this case, deprivation is not the initial cause of millenarianism, but millenarian ideology gives people a feeling of deprivation by comparing their lives to the Perfect World.

As to the context within which millenarian ideas operate in Japan, I discussed in Chapter II that Clarke sees the need for change in Japan in the continuing pressure on Japanese culture to absorb new ideas, particularly in the light of its Americanisation and its relatively new position on the global stage (Clarke, 2000: 5-6). Kisala (1998), on the other hand, sees the millenarianism of Japanese NRMs to be jumping on the bandwagon of the popularity of Nostradamus, and that they have sought to use the sensational and popular predictions to further their own ends in attracting followers. Yamashita (1998) has also written an article speculating that the popularity of Nostradamus across Japan is a form of escapism from the rigid social structure in which the Japanese live. Whilst I believe there is little doubt that all three have important points to make, what, I believe, is important when focusing on millenarian issues is that they highlight what people are seeking, and in this study of Kofuku-no-Kagaku that has revealed itself as self-transformation, closely related to a sense of happiness. In one sense one might suggest that this is escapism, because people are escaping from an unhappy existence to a happy one. However, in the sense that members are escaping reality, it is difficult to see how the self-transformation and happiness achieved by them could be labelled as such. With the Movement's emphasis on self-transformation, and its belief in cause and effect, millenarianism in this case has become a whole new concept, where the handle for change rests with the individual, not with the Apocalypse.

## 7.6 Conclusion

I began this chapter by discussing the apocalyptic dimension to Kofuku-no-Kagaku's vision and how this began to change in 1994 but did not change explicitly until 1996;



while the Movement made many references to the Apocalypse before 1996, after that date emphasis was placed on hope for a positive future. I also discussed the following millenarian features in Kofuku-no-Kagaku, first, that the Millennium happens on the individual level before it happens on the collective; second, it is essentially about change in a person's mind; third, it will begin soon, but it is not understood to come about suddenly; fourth, apocalyptic events are not part of the coming about of the Ideal World; and finally, the Millennium is not miraculous because it is to be brought about by individuals, but it is miraculous in both the sense that the achievement of self-transformation by individuals is considered to be a miracle, and the Movement's leader Okawa is believed to be the Highest Divine Spirit.

A further particularly important feature of Kofuku-no-Kagaku's vision of the future is that it is governed by the Buddhist teaching of the law of cause and effect and can, therefore, be determined by what people do and how they think now. In relation to evidence from the members, I also highlighted the fact that self-transformation is understood to lead to a transformation of society as well. In a consideration of Kofuku-no-Kagaku's attitude to the mass media, I have also shown how the Movement is seeking to bring about the Utopia actively within society, too.

The results of my research that I discussed in this chapter, that related to millenarianism, have isolated possible hypotheses for why Kofuku-no-Kagaku appeals to so many people. People in modern society are seeking answers to particular 'life questions' that they cannot find within the conventional framework of their daily lives. It appears they are turning to Kofuku-no-Kagaku because it has succeeded in offering them the answers to these questions that they cannot find elsewhere. What Kofuku-no-Kagaku seems to offer is a very tangible experience of happiness, achieved through a new way of looking at the world, and presented in such a way that these ideas make a practical difference to people's lives. This happiness is experienced both by a strong sense of mission, as members find a place where they are all needed, and by cultivating happiness through specific training that allows them to control their minds and interpret their troubles in a new light. The shift away from the Apocalypse in 1996 appears to have resulted in a new emphasis on direct religious experience, particularly through the facilities and training it provides at its temples, thus emphasising religious experience still further. It also has to be noted that there were many members who were not leading a particularly unsatisfactory life, but who, without any previous religious faith, still joined the Movement with the ideal of changing the world. A great many of these members claim they were searching for 'something' or 'some answers' and that they



wanted to develop spiritually, and this also indicates what post-modern society, as well as the historical religions, have failed to provide for them.

In the light of an understanding of Kofuku-no-Kagaku's Millennium, I shall now consider how it compares and contrasts with other NRMs in the following chapter.



## VIII. Kofuku-no-Kagaku's Millennium Compared and Contrasted

### 8.1 Contents of Chapter

In the last chapter, I discussed the nature of Kofuku-no-Kagaku's Millennium and highlighted how its emphasis concerning apocalyptic expectation shifted from the middle of the 1990s. In this chapter, I shall compare Kofuku-no-Kagaku's millenarian ideas with those of a select number of other Japanese NRMs. The purpose will be to show how Kofuku-no-Kagaku's millenarianism fits into a pattern common to other NRMs, and also how it differs and what is unique about it.

I shall begin by considering the teachings of Tenrikyō and then those of Omoto, Seichō-no-Ie, Sekai Kyūseikyō, Sūkyō Mahikari, GLA, Agonshū and Aum Shinrikyō. I shall summarise each movement's conception of the Millennium, and look in particular, at why it is inevitable, and how it will come about; I shall then compare these with the ideas of Kofuku-no-Kagaku. I shall also include a section on the influence of Nostradamus on Agonshū, Aum and Kofuku-no-Kagaku.

### 8.2 Comparison and Contrast – Tenrikyō to Mahikari

Tenrikyō was founded by a woman called Miki Nakayama (1798-1887) in 1838. In Chapter II, (p.25) I discussed her spiritual writings, known as *Ofudesaki* 'The Tip of the Writing Brush', and the fact that Shimazono (1986) understands her apocalyptic message to be very vague at the outset of the Movement and that predictions concerning catastrophe and imminent disaster only really surfaced when her Movement was persecuted after 1874. The *Ofudesaki* is a poetic and vague collection of writings rather than a systematised doctrine, but it is still possible to summarise the millenarian ideas that it expresses. Tenrikyō's Millennium consists of achieving a 'joyous life' (*yōki gurashi* 陽気ぐらし) in this world, which is achieved when people 'awaken joyfully to the knowledge that we are conducting our lives within the embrace of God the Parent' (Tenrikyō, 1986: 16). There are elements of self-reflection in attaining Joy: 'God the Parent, regretting our condition, shows us the true state of our minds and urges our self-reflection' (Tenrikyō, 1986: 12), and this is directed towards realising the true relationship people have with God, and recognising life's true purpose to lead others towards the same realisation. It is believed that the joyous life will be inaugurated by supernatural means through God the Parent:

'The Joyous Life will be attained only through the providence of God the



Parent, not by our own devices. When we all come to share our joys, then we can begin to live joyous lives together, and, when all of our minds are one with God the Parent and with one another, then God the Parent will manifest omnipotent workings and the Joyous Life will be realised'. (Tenrikyō, 1986: 16)

Another important feature of the Millennium in Tenrikyō is that it is universal. Cornille points out: 'Whereas the focus of Japanese religions at that time did not extend beyond the islands of Japan, Miki Nakayama was from the outset called to accomplish her mission 'throughout the world' (Nakayama, Ofudesaki, XVII: 11)' (Cornille, 2000:12). Cornille traces this universalism both to the monotheism of the Movement and to the quality of the revelations made by Nakayama.<sup>1</sup>

Nakayama's revelations also reveal why it is necessary to bring about the Utopia. Suffering is believed to be a direct result of not understanding God's true role in human life, and because of humanity's ignorance of this relationship they act selfishly, with hatred, greed and anger. These negative actions create a 'dust' that builds up in their hearts/minds and creates disease and unhappiness: 'Among all humankind, there is no one who is evil. It is only a bit of dust stuck on' (Ofudesaki I: 53). As long as this dust remains, God will be angry and full of regret, but once it is removed by the truth of Nakayama's revelations and the performance of certain practices: 'there shall be rich harvests and prosperity everywhere' (Ofudesaki I: 9).

Leading a virtuous life and practising certain rituals are, then, directly related to how the Millennium is believed to come about in Tenrikyō. Nakayama herself became the epitome or the 'Divine Model' (Tenrikyō, 1986: 14) of the perfectly virtuous life for the Movement, and she is depicted as an incredibly generous, selfless individual (Tenrikyō, 1986: Ch.3). Cornille points out that because of the universalism of Tenrikyō's salvation their missionary work was and still is undertaken both at home in Japan and abroad (Cornille, 2000: 13-4). The practices that are believed in the Movement to bring about salvation are related to the creation myth contained in the Ofudesaki. Interestingly, as Cornille points out, the myth has 'nationalistic undertones' (ibid., 14) as Japan is understood to be the location of what the Movement calls the *Jiba*, the place where the creation of humankind originally took place. The *Jiba* is central to bringing about salvation as it is used in the 'Kagura Service', the principal ritual of the Movement that re-enacts creation itself.

Despite the difference in their contexts, the Millennium of Tenrikyō in some ways resembles that of Kofuku-no-Kagaku, as both begin with the heart/mind of the

---

<sup>1</sup> See: Cornille, 2000: 12-3.



person, are concerned with the happiness of the individual, and are also universal. In Kofuku-no-Kagaku, if one holds on to a ‘wrong mind’, which generates emotions such as anger, lust, and hatred, one will be connected to Hell, and life will be very miserable; the importance of self-reflection is therefore taught in order to cultivate the ‘Right Mind’. Another comparison can be made between Tenrikyō’s Parent God and El Cantare; the High Divine Spirit El Cantare is often regarded within Kofuku-no-Kagaku as *Tamashii no Oya* 魂の親 or ‘The Parent of the Spirits’.

Some fifty years after Tenrikyō was founded, Nao Deguchi (1834-1910) founded Omoto (1892) after a possession experience that led her to become the mouthpiece for the God *Ushitora no Konjin*. Later Deguchi was helped significantly by Omoto’s co-founder, Onisaburō Deguchi (1871-1948). As discussed in Chapter II, Deguchi conceived of a Millennium that was the antithesis of the westernisation adopted during the Meiji Period. Ooms has pointed out that the Millennium in Omoto expresses the polar opposites of the values and ideas of the Meiji Period (Ooms, 1993: 78). Clarke also draws attention to the fact that Deguchi’s vision of the Millennium was not simply a wish to return to the ways of the past, but rather: ‘Nao’s plea was more a plea for that as yet never realised condition: an equal, just and peaceful world’ (Clarke, 2000: 138).

Deguchi lived in the expectation that the God who spoke through her, was to give His final judgement upon the evils of man soon, and that this would entail huge calamities that would wipe away up to two thirds of the population, and herald in the Perfect World (Ooms, 1993: 64). The Millennium was also prepared for with the use of rituals, and Deguchi constructed a model of the Perfect World in Ayabe, her home village. These rituals, termed *shusshu* (ibid., 58), involved a creation myth in the same way that Nakayama’s rituals had done, but in Deguchi’s case, they expressed both the prerequisites of purification and suffering that were necessary before the Millennium could come about. Not only did Deguchi’s myth have the same nationalistic undertones seen in Tenrikyō, Onisaburo Deguchi understood Japan to play a special role in the salvation of mankind; he understood Japan to be a microcosm of the wider world – the various islands corresponding to countries around the world (Cornille, 2000: 19). Another of Onisaburo Deguchi’s ideas of salvation was the traditional Buddhist belief in the coming of *Maitreya* (or *Miroku* 弥勒), ‘The Future Buddha’, and Onisaburo Deguchi came to identify himself with Maitreya.

Omoto’s Millennium is perhaps a perfect example of Cohn’s classical definition of millenarianism. It was conceived as the polar opposite of the present establishment,



and would herald a sudden and total world transformation through divine intervention. Although Kofuku-no-Kagaku's Utopia is also the polar opposite of many values in the modern world, such as materialism, atheism, attachment to this-worldly things and selfishness, the Movement does not condemn modern means of creating economic prosperity for example, and is not anti-establishment in the same way as Omoto. The fact that Kofuku-no-Kagaku's Utopia concentrates on the heart/mind of the individual, means that its emphasis is focused on self-reflection and self-change rather than on transforming the outside world through divine intervention. Another difference is the relationship between the Apocalypse and the Utopia; in early Omoto the Apocalypse was the central issue within the Movement and was understood to herald in the transformed world, with the Ayabe region at its centre. Omoto therefore sees the destruction of the world as inevitable in order for the new, Perfect World to take its place. Kofuku-no-Kagaku, on the other hand, teaches that the Millennium is not dependant on the Apocalypse, and since 1996, has dropped its Apocalyptic message in favour of a positive attitude to the future.

Masaharu Taniguchi (1893-1985), the founder of Seichō-no-Ie, used to be one of the principal members of staff in Omoto. Taniguchi gradually started to question and doubt Omoto doctrine, especially its apocalyptic predictions relating to the Judgement of God. He states in his autobiographical book 'The Truth of Life' (Vol.19, 1992b) that Omoto was a religion which predicted that all people with evil minds and those who had sinned would be destroyed by the great power of God, and that an immaculate world would be created. He then goes on to compare this to the destruction wrought by Jehovah of the Old Testament (Taniguchi, 1992b: 137). Taniguchi's discomfort with such a wrathful God led him to leave Omoto and establish Seichō-no-Ie in 1930. The God that Taniguchi believed in was the God of compassion, and this made for a very different millenarian approach to that of Omoto.

The Millennium in Seichō-no-Ie is conceived of as a place where: 'all people can attain spiritual fulfilment through the realisation of the God-consciousness within all of us' (Clarke ed., 1999: 220). It is necessary to bring this about because of the suffering in the world, which can be brought to an end once people realise the true cause of their condition and root it out. In order to allow the Millennium to come about the Movement's objectives are threefold: the worship of life; to live with respect and according to the laws of life; and to spread this message in order to let as many people as possible live in this way, gradually illuminating the life of the entire human race



(Taniguchi, 1992a, Vol.1: 3-4).<sup>2</sup> Taniguchi believed that the healing power of the word of God could be used to alleviate illness and disease and allow the God-consciousness to be realised in each individual. He considered this type of healing to be necessary because suffering had its root cause in the mind rather than the body: ‘All sufferings and difficulties are believed to be either the symbolic reflection of one’s erroneous thinking or the results of self-punishment and can be overcome through self-reflection’ (Clarke ed., 1999: 220). This has led Lande and Clarke to conclude that Seichō-no-Ie is ‘primarily about healing’ (Lande and Clarke, 1991: 179), although in my view it could equally be argued that the Movement is primarily about its mission, which is to ‘illuminate (or enlighten) the entire human race’; healing is thus part of its mission, as it comes about through its process of illumination, rather than its primary function. It is also important to note that the fundamental theme in the practices of Seichō-no-Ie is to look at what it calls *Jissō* 実相 or the ‘True Appearance’ and any experience, such as sadness, illness, misunderstanding and fear are all said to appear because one is not looking at *Jissō*; followers worship the calligraphy of the word *Jissō* on their altar. If the attainment of Enlightenment is to see things as they really are, looking at the ‘True Appearance’ of things must be a similar state of awakening.

As a result of Taniguchi’s shift towards the idea of a non-judgemental God there is hardly any emphasis on the impending doom in Seichō-no-Ie’s doctrine that occupied so much of Omoto’s ideas. That said, however, Taniguchi made a rare, yet explicit warning at the end of 1982 about impending disaster. In this warning, he expressed his anxiety about the way modern society was developing, and published an article entitled: ‘*Great Warning: If the Status Quo is Left Untouched, Humankind will be Exterminated*’ (Taniguchi, 1983).<sup>3</sup> Unlike Omoto’s ideas of God’s judgement the imminent disaster Taniguchi warned of was one of self-destruction through ignorance. He believed that human beings in modern society behave like ‘dinosaurs that killed each other’, and he compared nuclear weapons with their tusks and horns (Taniguchi, 1983: 37). Taniguchi also explained that a number of underground nuclear tests had damaged what he called the Earth’s “Etheric Matter” エーテル体マテリアル, something which he believed governs the entire terrestrial system. Taniguchi teaches that the Earth is a live entity, both physically and spiritually, that human beings are related to it, and that the system

---

<sup>2</sup> The pagination of this book (Taniguchi, 1992a) is split into two sections, the Introduction and the main body of the book, both of which start at page 1 – pages 3-4 referenced here are from the main body.

<sup>3</sup> The Japanese title of this article is: ‘*Ichidai Keikoku: Genjō-no-Mama de Keizoku-Surunaraba Jinrui wa Metsubō-suru*’ 一大警告：現状のままで継続するならば人類は滅亡する, in Taniguchi, 1983, Ch.1: 35-41.



of the human body is identical to that of the Earth. For this reason, the damage in the Etheric Matter of the Earth has resulted in anti-social behaviour in people, especially the young (*ibid.*, 35-41). Taniguchi observed that the fossilised skeletons of dinosaurs are the symbol of the future of humankind if they carry on living in this way (*ibid.*, 40).

Kofuku-no-Kagaku's Utopia is similar to Seichō-no-Ie's Ideal World in the sense that it is related to people realising the truth about themselves, and that it focuses on the mind to bring about that Ideal World. Seichō-no-Ie aims to create more people who can see Jissō, or the 'True Appearance' of things, an approach which can be compared very closely with Kofuku-no-Kagaku's emphasis on self-reflection, as well as its emphasis on Buddhist teachings. Another similarity is Okawa's understanding of the problems in society which are not unlike Taniguchi's; ignorance is understood to breed negativity of mind and problems arise from this. However, the Apocalypse is different in the two movements; while both see the Planet Earth as a live entity, their concepts of cataclysm are different. Kofuku-no-Kagaku understands that the Earth itself wants to purge the world of problems (through such calamities as earthquakes and a pole shift), whereas Seichō-no-Ie believes that humans might destroy themselves, especially with nuclear weapons. Despite this, like Seichō-no-Ie, Kofuku-no-Kagaku also displays extreme anxiety about nuclear weapons (Okawa, 1997a: 135-141; 1995e: 75-9), and has talked of a close relationship between the possession of nuclear weapons and natural disasters, revealed for the first time in its film about Nostradamus.

All the movements discussed so far emphasise calamity before the Millennium to a greater or lesser degree, although Seichō-no-Ie's talk of calamity is somewhat different as Taniguchi's warning of the fate of mankind is related simply to its use of nuclear weapons. Two movements that express calamity in a very explicit way, like Omoto, are Sekai-Kyūseikyō and Mahikari.

Sekai Kyūseikyō, also known as The Church of World Messianity, was founded by Mokichi Okada (1882-1955) in 1935. The Movement's conception of the Kingdom of God is understood to be a world of peace and beauty, where there is no worry, agony or sickness. Beauty is regarded as highly important: 'the purpose of beauty and art is to elevate human souls and bring them close to the spiritual world' (Thomsen, 1963: 178). It has built a number of 'models' of the coming New World, which give a very tangible idea of what the Millennium will be like. Thomsen comments that the function of these prototypes of the Kingdom is to 'convey to the believers the feeling of happiness through beauty' (*ibid.*, 24). A vital part of the Kingdom is an exceptional collection of art housed in a museum.



Okada believed that the world's problems of sickness, crime, conflict and poverty are caused by our inability to see the simplicity of nature's truth and to live by it; for Okada: 'Evil which, on balance, outweighs good, is inextricably linked to illness' (Clarke, 2000: 153) and illness is a result of the build-up of negative energy which requires a special form of purification called *jōrei* 浄霊. Like many Japanese NRMs, Sekai Kyūseikyō believes that illness is the product of evil thoughts or ways of living, such as hatred and anger (Inoue et al, 1994: 357). Okada, like Taniguchi, used to be a devoted member of Omoto, but unlike Taniguchi, Okada embraced the idea that the destruction of the old world was necessary before the Golden Age could emerge because 'The old house must be destroyed before the new one can be built', and 'the closer we come to the day of the construction of Paradise on Earth, the more numerous the calamities will become' (Thomsen, 1963: 177).

Sekai Kyūseikyō's Ideal World appears to have a very natural element to it, both in the sense that beauty can embody and express truth, and in the sense that nature embodies truth. Kofuku-no-Kagaku's Utopia is not expressed in the same way. This is also reflected in Sekai Kyūseikyō's 'models' and Kofuku-no-Kagaku's temples, or *Shōshin-kan* 正心館/*Shōja* 精舎. I asked one manager of Kofuku-no-Kagaku Europe if Kofuku-no-Kagaku's temples were considered to be prototypes of the Utopia in a similar way to Sekai Kyūseikyō's facilities. Mr Tsuchida explained that while Kofuku-no-Kagaku's temples are mainly used as religious training centres, there is a sense in which they are related to the Utopia, but only as 'vessels' of Utopia. Mr Tsuchida also explained: 'the model of Kofuku-no-Kagaku's Utopia is the *Sangha* (the community of the Buddha's disciples) itself, or it would be found within the Sangha'.<sup>4</sup> The purpose of constructing these temples for the Movement is primarily to provide visitors with a religious environment, which is detached from the outside, secular world.

Sūkyō Mahikari, 崇教真光, was founded by Keishu Okada (1929- ) in 1978 after she split from the original Mahikari Movement after the death of her father, Kōutama Okada (1901-1974), founder of the original Mahikari. Sūkyō Mahikari understands the Millennium to be a place of peace, happiness and harmony, where neither the individual nor the planet is polluted. Peace is emphasised in terms of establishing harmony between civilisations: 'The Movement urges that the coming civilisation should make the best use of the cultures and traditions of each religion, without conflict between religious sects, races and nations' (Clarke ed., 1999: 180). Despite this, the Movement does give Japan a very important role in the future history and salvation of the world.

---

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Mr Tsuchida, London, 30<sup>th</sup> July 1997.



This is because, not unlike Tenrikyō, creation and salvation are linked; Japan is understood to be the location of the original creation of humankind, called the *Suza* (Cornille, 2000: 19).

The Movement believes that the suffering and illness of the present world are due to the fact that humans have long forgotten the will of God and become egocentric. Illness is, therefore, understood to be a kind of purification, resulting from spiritual, karmic or physical pollution, and the symptoms of illness are interpreted as the body's attempt to get rid of this pollution (Matsunaga, 2000: 205). Purification is seen as necessary, not just at the individual level, but for the whole of human civilisation. Like Sekai Kyūseikyō, as well as many other NRMs, Mahikari believes that the world is facing a period of great transition, through which it will be transformed into a more spiritually oriented civilisation. In order for this to happen, a period of purification, called the 'Baptism of Fire' (*Hi no Senrei-ki* 火の洗礼期), which is said to have begun on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1962, is believed to be taking place (Shimazono, 2001: 63). This process of purification, wrought by God, shows itself in the form of abnormal weather, earthquakes and man-made and natural catastrophes. The Movement teaches that God chose Keishu's father, Koutama Okada, to be the only Messiah on Earth, and he has given the hand ritual, called *Mahikari no Waza* (Act of Mahikari) or *te-kazashi* 手かざし (an act of holding one's hand over the head of another person) to help in this process. With this ritual, the members are believed to radiate divine light through their hand to another person; Mahikari's mission is to purify all impure souls and overcome the period of the Baptism of Fire. The great earthquake which hit the cities of Osaka and Kobe, and the incidents caused by Aum (both of which occurred in Japan in 1995) are, according to Mahikari, signs of the purification period (Kashio, 1997: 207). This strong association between the future Golden Age and the Apocalypse may have its roots in the founder's previous affiliation to Sekai Kyūseikyō, that is in turn derived from Omoto.

Kofuku-no-Kagaku stands out from the movements so far discussed as it places more emphasis on the role of knowledge leading to self-transformation. However, it can be seen from this comparison that many, if not all, Japanese millenarian movements attach importance to the heart/mind or intellect in this process in some way.

### 8.3 Comparison and Contrast - GLA, Agonshū and Aum Shinrikyō

A movement which makes a particularly interesting comparison with Kofuku-no-Kagaku is GLA, 'God Light Association', formed by the followers of Shinji Takahashi 高橋信次 (1927-1976) in 1969. GLA has no clear object of worship, very few religious



rituals (Numata, 1987: 88) and an eclectic doctrine. Takahashi quoted various religious figures in his teachings, such as the Buddha, Jesus and Moses, and also used elements of science-fiction; for example he taught that the first humans migrated to earth from a planet called Beta using spaceships 365 million years ago. The ultimate purpose of the Movement is to establish the 'Buddha-land Utopia' on earth.

As a child, Takahashi underwent a number of religious experiences, including near death and out of body experiences, after which he started visiting a nearby Shintō shrine to pray. He then became aware of the 'Truth' and reached enlightenment in 1968, after which he started to teach to a few people who visited him. These visitors swelled in number to 60-70 people and they volitionally formed a group that became GLA; the Movement obtained 'religious body' status in 1973.

Takahashi was believed by his followers to be the reincarnation of Gautama Buddha. His teaching was called *Shinri* 神理, or God's Truth, which includes the belief that spirits are reincarnated on earth as human beings over and over again. During his lecture meetings, Takahashi sometimes held spiritual dialogue sessions, called *reidō genshō* 霊道現象, in which he used a number of different 'foreign tongues' that GLA called ancient Indian and ancient Chinese. Some observers point out that GLA's development coincided with a time when the occult was booming in Japan, and rather than his teachings concerning human life, it was Takahashi's psychic powers that attracted many people to GLA (Numata: 1987: 87).

Takahashi involved his daughter, Keiko (1956- ), in the Movement's activities, and she became known as Michael (after Archangel Michael). Takahashi died in 1969 at the age of 48, as he had predicted, and Keiko, while still a university student, became the leader of GLA. A number of Takahashi's high ranking disciples subsequently left the Movement, however, and established their own movements. GLA's main office is in Tokyo and it has a membership of about 16,000 to 17,000 followers (Numata, 1995: 171, Inoue et al, 1996: 91).

Three months before his death, Takahashi revealed for the first time that he was the True Messiah, called *El Ranty* (Numata, 1987: 78; 1995: 154). El Ranty is believed to have 'taught the law of the Buddha, practised the love of Jesus, and performed the miracles of Moses'; his mission was to bring the Utopia to humankind (Numata, 1995: 154). According to Numata's detailed research into GLA's cosmology (1987), El Ranty's existence is identified with the 'Grand Divine Spirit of the Grand Cosmos' (*Daiuchū-daishinrei* 大宇宙大神霊), under whom are three main Divine Spirits, namely Agasha (or Jesus), Cantare (or Shakyamuni) and Moses (Numata, 1987: 84). El



Ranty is also understood to be ‘the Forefather of Humankind’ (*Jinrui no So* 人類の祖), because it is this figure that brought the first group of humans to earth (Numata, 1987: 84-5; 1995: 155).

I mentioned in Chapter IV (p.64, Footnote 6) that there are similarities between GLA’s cosmology and that of Kofuku-no-Kagaku, and that some researchers, including Numata (1995: 114) and Shimazono (2001: 198), have pointed out the influence of Takahashi’s ideas on Okawa; something Kofuku-no-Kagaku has clearly distanced itself from since 1994 when it described GLA as an ‘evil religion’ that belonged to ‘Minor Heaven’. However, it is clear that Kofuku-no-Kagaku embraced the idea of El Ranty up until 1994; the Movement identified El Ranty with Takahashi when Okawa published 15 volumes of, what he called, Takahashi’s ‘spiritual messages’ during the period between December 1986 and January 1991. The key divine figure in Kofuku-no-Kagaku, ‘El Cantare’, appears in GLA’s cosmology, too. For this reason, Numata observes that Kofuku-no-Kagaku managed to attract many GLA members and Takahashi sympathisers in its early years (Numata, 1995: 241).

Other parallels between Kofuku-no-Kagaku are apparent. GLA teaches that humans are born on earth to develop their souls, because the phenomenal world provides the most appropriate opportunities for ‘soul training’. For this reason, all the difficulties one encounters are believed to help the soul to develop, a concept almost completely shared by Kofuku-no-Kagaku. GLA also understands the world to be far from perfect and believes all humans have a common mission – to establish Utopia on earth, which is called the ‘Buddha-land’, and this idea and term, too, is shared by Kofuku-no-Kagaku. According to GLA, the earth is in crisis because humans are becoming materialistic and preoccupied with this-worldly achievements, and have become biased, discriminating, and full of hatred. GLA believes that what it calls the ‘right mind’, qualities such as love, compassion and harmony are absent and it teaches the importance of purifying the wrong mind to regain the ‘right mind’ by, for example, practising self-reflection. Takahashi saw the current state of the modern world as the age of *mappō*, or the last days of the Buddha’s Law, however, unlike early Kofuku-no-Kagaku, Takahashi did not refer to an imminent Apocalypse, caused by the present state of crisis. The meaning of life on earth, he explained, was to pursue the development of one’s individual soul, and at the same time establish the Utopia on earth. It can also be said that Kofuku-no-Kagaku’s theology shares the same basic doctrinal structure as GLA in this respect. However, in GLA’s early years there was no methodology for the establishment of the Utopia, only an emphasis on correcting the mind that would



eventually transform the rest of society; Shimazono describes this as a method without practice (Shimazono, 2001: 204). By contrast, Kofuku-no-Kagaku has offered a systematic practice to achieve its final objectives, with its 'Fourfold Path' of love, knowledge, self-reflection and development, also known as the Principles of Happiness, as well as various study programmes and examinations, for example.

As discussed in Chapter II, Shimazono points out that the pessimistic expectation of the Apocalypse, that can be observed in many of the Japanese NRMs detailed so far, was to become less common during the 1950s and early 1960s, and, instead, they became more optimistic about the future (Shimazono, 2001: 62-3). However, Apocalyptic expectation became more widespread again around the end of the 1960s, and by the 1980s expectations increased due to the approach of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Shimazono, 2001: 62-3). Mahikari, in particular, showed strong enthusiasm for the idea of impending calamities (Shimazono, 2001: 63). One particularly strong influence on the apocalyptic thinking of NRMs at this time, was the prophecies of Nostradamus, and I will now look at this influence in more detail.

As discussed, particularly in Chapter VII, (p.184), Okawa started to refer to the prophecies of Nostradamus in 1991, when Kofuku-no-Kagaku's apocalyptic messages were at their height. Okawa referred to Nostradamus and his prophecies, at this time, in relation not only to ideas about the Apocalypse, but also in relation to the appearance of both Hermes, who Okawa identifies himself with, and the Movement's principal book, 'The Laws of the Sun'.

The reason why Nostradamus' prophecies became so widely used by 'new' new religions, including the movements Agonshū and Aum Shinrikyō, that I will discuss below, is related to the distinctive social context in Japan after the early 1970s and the appearance of the first edition of the book 'The Great Prophecies of Nostradamus'. This book, published in 1973 by Ben Goto, spread the name of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century French physician and soothsayer across Japan, and suddenly created a huge 'Nostradamus boom'. This coincided, too, with the so called 'occult boom' in Japan, which it may have helped to fuel. After the success of his first book, Goto, who 'planted the prophecies of Nostradamus in the hearts of the Japanese' (Shimazono, 2001: 78), went on to publish nine more volumes on Nostradamus by the end of 1998. In the books he interpreted Nostradamus' symbolic and famously ambiguous quatrains, for example, asserting that 'the age of the Sun will come' and 'the law of the Messiah will be held by the Country of the Sun' were references to Japan. Perhaps most significantly, he implied that the end of humankind would come as long as humans carried on living the



way they were at present, and that the seventh month of the year 1999 would be a crucial period (Goto, 1991a, 1991b, 1991c, 1998).

Goto's influence has been of interest to scholars of 'new' new religions in Japan, such as Kisala (1998), discussed in Chapter II, and Yamashita (1998). Shimazono has also discussed the clear link between Goto and both Kiriya of Agonshū and Asahara of Aum Shinrikyō in his 'Goto – Kiriya – Asahara' sequence (Shimazono, 2001: 80). If, as I shall discuss below, Shimazono's sequence is correct, then Goto's influence over a number of millenarian and apocalyptic new religions is considerable. In other words, if Goto had not published the books on Nostradamus during the 1970s, would any 'new' new religions in modern Japan have mentioned Nostradamus and thus preached the coming of the end of the world as the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century approached? It is, perhaps, hardly surprising that they did employ the interest in Nostradamus in their own ideas; Okawa and Asahara, who were both in their late teens when Goto's book first appeared in 1973, must have lived through the Nostradamus boom. As discussed in Chapter II (p.32), Kisala has argued that a figure of such popular appeal was the perfect vehicle upon which to advertise the movements' messages, and also that the predictions could be used to validate and give authority to these messages.

Agonshū 阿含宗 was strongly influenced by the prophecies of Nostradamus. The founder, Seiyū Kiriya (1921- ), was inspired to start his Movement after he went through a salvific experience which involved the Buddhist Bodhisattva *Kan-non* (or *Avalokitesvara*), and by a later experience when Kan-non came to him in a dream and told him to 'become a guide for others so that they may also find salvation' (Clarke ed., 1999: 135). Kiriya initially founded a Buddhist group in 1954, but re-established it as Agonshū in 1978, using the *Agama Sūtras*, scriptures from early Buddhism that the Movement claimed were the 'essence of original Buddhism and spoken by Shakyamuni himself' as a new form of authority (ibid., 135).

The Millennium in Agonshū is a world conceived with 'new social rules and ethics' (ibid., 137) that will ensure world peace. This is necessary, because the Movement understands the world to be in crisis and on course for self-destruction, caused by the pollution and subsequent environmental damage of modern science and technology (ibid., 137).

Kiriya's ideas are based on the claim that traditional Buddhism has lost its original message. When the truth is known through the authority of the *Agama Sūtras*, however, and the proper practices followed, release from negative karma, happiness, good fortune and wisdom will develop (ibid., 136). The Movement understands the



root cause of suffering in the world to be the result of the negative effects of karma generated by the dead on the living. Only once these dead are liberated can the living be free of their influence and achieve the happiness and enlightenment they seek (Reader, 1991: 212-3). This is of global significance because the implications of negative karma flow from the individual to the whole world, and if left unchecked, will lead to the destruction of the world (ibid., 213).

In 1995 Kiriyaama predicted that catastrophe would result after a great earthquake that would split a nuclear power station, but also asserted that catastrophe could be averted. Kiriyaama believes that he is the 'King of Agama', whom Nostradamus predicted would appear in July 1999, and that Buddhism has the solution to world destruction while Christianity does not, and also states in his book published in 1981 that: 'if destruction of the world does not come by 2010, the human race will enjoy peace and prosperity for a very long time' (Shimazono, 1995: 28). As we have seen in other Movements discussed above, Japan is again given a central role in Agonshū's ideas.

Kofuku-no-Kagaku and Agonshū both believe that Nostradamus made a prediction that a great saviour would arrive in Japan, and both believe that Buddha would come to Japan from India to lead their salvation movements. Okawa and Kiriyaama both claim to be the great saviour that Nostradamus predicted, and both also claim that they are in fact the reincarnation of the Buddha and that traditional Buddhist teachings have been distorted. However, whereas Kiriyaama relies on the textual authority of the Agama Sūtras to propagate the authentic teachings of the Buddha, Okawa does not rely on any traditional Buddhist scriptures, but teaches his Buddhist message through his charismatic authority as the reincarnation of the Buddha.

The other Movement I shall discuss here which used the prophecies of Nostradamus to validate its own predictions is Aum Shinrikyō. Aum was founded by Shōkō Asahara (1955- ) in 1984. Kisala points out that Asahara was clearly influenced by Kiriyaama of Agonshū, and that Asahara also used Nostradamus and his prophecies to validate his own ideas (Kisala, 1998: 150).

The Millennium in Aum is called *Shambala*: 'the ideal Buddhist Kingdom united under religious law' (Reader, 1996: 24). Asahara had a global mission to create this Kingdom, although it was to be made up of all those who had attained sufficient psychic power under Asahara's leadership and instruction. Pursuit of enlightenment through various techniques was the primary method of creating Shambala; a training which famously involved the ability to levitate. In a different perspective to Kisala's



‘escape clause’ theory discussed in Chapter II (p.33), Shimazono asserts that Aum belonged to a type of ‘new’ new religion that understands modern society to be going in the wrong direction and, thus, in a state of crisis. In order to correct this, an NRM of this type tends to neglect any friction that it causes with the rest of society, and to justify their position through their faith (Shimazono, 2001: 66). Another way to characterise Aum is to see it as what I would call a ‘commune type’ of NRM with ‘renouncers’ who reject their secular lives, including all ties with their friends and family, and live as ascetics within a community inside a movement’s facilities. Shimazono calls this a *kakuri-gata* 隔離型 or ‘isolation type’ religion, and he understands both the Unification Church and Jehovah’s Witnesses to fall into this category, too (Shimazono, 1992b: 20-21).<sup>5</sup> Kofuku-no-Kagaku, by contrast, does not have such facilities for communal living, nor promote ascetic practices. Although the staff in the Movement are also called ‘renouncers’ or *shukke-sha* 出家者, they do not lead communal or monastic lives, but instead, live within society and commute in business suits using public transport, and in this respect Kofuku-no-Kagaku could be described as a ‘commute type’<sup>6</sup> new religion.

As mentioned above, Asahara used Nostradamus to validate predictions of Armageddon, which he asserted could be avoided if negative energies were reversed. Interestingly, Shimazono sees not only Goto’s influence in Aum’s idea of cataclysm, but also the influence of Omoto’s early apocalyptic expectation, as well as the traditional cataclysmic doctrine of the Nichiren school of Buddhism (Shimazono, 2001: 78-9). By 1991 the Movement had moved away from concerns about global salvation, and become more concerned with the salvation of a select few who would go on to build the Millennium after Armageddon. It is in this ‘increasingly pessimistic’ environment, according to Kisala, that Aum takes recourse in violence by creating its own Armageddon (Kisala, 1998: 151).

The number of reliable articles by either academics or journalists on Kofuku-no-Kagaku is still very limited, but when it has been written about it has often been compared to Aum Shinrikyō. Yamashita points out that the reason these comparisons have been made is because the two movements were established at similar times, the

---

<sup>5</sup> Shimazono points out that although Jehovah’s Witnesses does not have the facilities for communal living, unlike Aum Shinrikyō or the Unification Church, the members still have to be engaged with the Movement, frequently attending meetings, practising strict rules and carrying out their obligatory missionary work. Because of this strict religious affiliation, it has created a considerable ‘gap’ between itself and secular society; for this reason, Shimazono considers that Jehovah’s Witnesses should be considered an ‘isolation type’ religion (Shimazono, 1992b: 21).

<sup>6</sup> An exception to this is Kofuku-no-Kagaku’s temples/retreat centres, which are looked after by some members of staff 24 hours a day, but this is not for the purpose of communal living.



two leaders are almost the same age and both managed to attract a number of people, particularly from the younger generations, including extremely well-educated ones, with their charismatic performance and psychic power (Yamashita, 1997: 66).

Kofuku-no-Kagaku and Aum have both expressed their discomfort with such comparisons, and both movements published articles that strongly criticised each other. Shimazono suggests that Kofuku-no-Kagaku was seen by the general public as a rival to Aum, particularly around 1991 (Shimazono, 1995: 39). He cites a programme broadcast on 28<sup>th</sup> September 1991, when senior members of staff from both movements, including Asahara, appeared on a live discussion programme on national television, and took part in a long debate, which also involved a number of other critics and academics. Shimazono observes that it was Aum that was able to gain the upper hand throughout the debate and as a result earned more support from the audience (*ibid.*, 39). Shimazono goes on to point out that this debate, along with the fact that Kofuku-no-Kagaku was heavily criticised in the mass media around this time, damaged Kofuku-no-Kagaku's reputation, and this must have been a factor that contributed to the spread of Aum's positive image (*ibid.*, 39).

There are similarities, but also fundamental differences between these two new religions. In terms of membership numbers, researchers can only go by the figures that the movements themselves produce. Kofuku-no-Kagaku declared that their membership had exceeded 10 million in 1995 whereas in Aum, the number of members was about ten thousand, including 1,114 renouncers or *shukke shugyō-sha* 出家修行者 (Shimazono, 1995: 5-6). In relation to the movements' ideas about the Millennium, Buddhism plays a part in both their concepts of the Millennium, but Kofuku-no-Kagaku's Millennium, brought about through the mind, can be contrasted here with Aum's millenarian expectation that is associated largely with what it calls 'Armageddon'. As Shimazono has pointed out (2001), many NRMs see the Apocalypse and the coming of the New World to be interdependent, and the two concepts are deeply intertwined in Aum as well. As mentioned above, Kisala has pointed out that Aum used its prophecies about an apocalyptic period very differently from Kofuku-no-Kagaku, as well as Agonshū; while Kofuku-no-Kagaku shifted its emphasis away from cataclysm and towards positive thinking, Asahara increased tension in his movement and this generated extreme behaviour from his followers.

The difference between a positive and a negative approach to the Millennium is picked up on by researchers such as Reader, Shimazono and Clarke, who point out that



the central part of Asahara's millenarianism came from its, so-called, 'world-rejection'<sup>7</sup> view (Reader, 1996: 23; Shimazono, 1997b: 71-3), which led him to the expectation of the end of the world and a preoccupation with the ideas of 'Armageddon' and cataclysm, especially after 1989 (Shimazono, 1997b: 86; Clarke, 1999: 272). Despite Asahara's initial idea that such cataclysm could be avoided 'by 30,000 individuals accepting and practising Aum's teachings and following the example of Asahara himself' (Clarke ed., 1999: 272), Shimazono suggests that Asahara put little emphasis on the new happy world which was to follow, nor what the New World was going to be like (Shimazono, 1997b: 86). Reader suggests that the main factor which led to violence in Aum was its 'world-rejectionism' and its 'millenarianism' and Shimazono shares this view (Reader, 1996: 23; Shimazono, 1997b: 71). According to Shimazono's analysis, Aum created friction with the outside world, and thus became isolated, it then increased the sense of hostility and confrontation with the outside world (Shimazono, 1997b: 76). To summarise Reader's and Shimazono's analysis, first, Aum embraced the idea of apocalypticism; second, it rejected the status quo of modern Japanese society; third, this rejection developed into hostility and confrontation through isolation; and fourth, it came to use violence in order to destroy the outside world (Shimazono, 1997b: 76; Reader, 1996: 51-3). It appears that the way millenarianism functioned in Aum was completely opposite to its function in Kofuku-no-Kagaku.

#### 8.4 Conclusion

The comparisons discussed in this chapter highlight many differences in form and context between Kofuku-no-Kagaku and the other NRMs. Whereas in most of the NRMs discussed here, there is great emphasis on impending disaster, in Kofuku-no-Kagaku there is great emphasis on bringing about the Millennium through the efforts of each individual member. These efforts involve change, but not through the destruction of the present order anticipated by Nao Deguchi or Miki Nakayama, for example, but radical internal change of the mind/heart of the individual as each member becomes enlightened and contributes to the happiness of society as a whole. Kofuku-no-Kagaku's views concerning the future are based on a positive belief in the abilities of humans with strong faith, and, for this reason, even though the Apocalypse was

---

<sup>7</sup> According to Wallis' typology of NRMs, a world-rejecting new religion expects that 'the Millennium will shortly commence or that the movement will sweep the world, and, when all have become members or when they are in the majority, or when they have become guides and counsellors to kings and presidents, then a new world-order will begin, conceived of as a simpler, more loving, more humane and more spiritual order in which the old evils and mistakes will be eradicated, and utopia will have begun' (Wallis, 1984: 11).



mentioned frequently at one point, Kofuku-no-Kagaku is not a new religion based on apocalyptic expectations in the same way as NRMs such as Omoto, Sekai Kyūseikyō, Mahikari, Agonshū and Aum Shinrikyō.

When I interviewed Mr Tainaka of Kofuku-no-Kagaku's International Division, he also explained that one of the biggest differences between Kofuku-no-Kagaku and other religious movements is found in the views about an apocalyptic future. This, he explained, is because Kofuku-no-Kagaku understands the 'mechanism' of calamities to be determined by the laws of cause and effect, and that the Apocalypse can, therefore, be avoided.<sup>8</sup>

The comparisons have revealed that the Movement which appears to have many similarities with Kofuku-no-Kagaku is GLA. However, a comparison with GLA also reveals that Kofuku-no-Kagaku has a unique approach to how, what both movements call the Buddha-land Utopia, is achieved. What seems to be little more than a concept in GLA, is achieved in Kofuku-no-Kagaku with a more concrete methodology of self-transformation through such doctrines as the 'Principles of Happiness' and the 'Development of Love'.

---

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Mr Tainaka, Tokyo, 17<sup>th</sup> May, 1997.



## IX. Conclusion

I started out in this thesis to address the question of what is the nature of the Millennium as taught by Kofuku-no-Kagaku, and why millenarian ideas should be so appealing in the modern Japanese context, because people, in terms of material wealth, have almost everything. My enquiry was motivated by the fact that modern Japan is a society that is very advanced, technologically, economically, and in most of the ways that people could wish for. Many societies hope for this level of wealth and technological advancement, yet within Japanese society, many new kinds of millenarianism have emerged, and my question is to address why and what form these millenarian ideas take. In understanding that, it will help in an understanding of what people think and feel about themselves and about the condition of an advanced modern society, such as Japan. The aim of this thesis is also to show how the characteristics of Kofuku-no-Kagaku's millenarian ideas resemble and differ from other millenarian movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries.

I discussed in the Introduction how common millenarian ideas are in Japanese NRMs that began to emerge in great numbers in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and how, particularly in 1991, Kofuku-no-Kagaku stressed almost certain imminent disaster for the human race as it approached the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, unless more people became aware of their true mission and purpose in life through realising that the Buddha had now started his salvation movement on earth. The Movement also promised a new era for humankind, which it called Buddha-land Utopia, that would arrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, after 2020 (Okawa: 1993a: 37), as long as Kofuku-no-Kagaku's activities progressed as planned. This would be characterised by people's spiritual awakening to their true identity as children of Buddha/God.

A survey of the literature specific to Japanese new and 'new' new religions, discussed in Chapter II, considered the various theories posited by writers such as Blacker (1971), McFarland (1967) and Ooms (1993) concerning both the rise of Japanese NRMs and their millenarian content. Their emergence is perhaps particularly surprising considering the fact that there is little in Japan's early history to anticipate the emergence of millenarian ideas before the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century. A quasi-apocalyptic belief system can be seen as far back as the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, expounded by the prominent Buddhist monk Nichiren. The Buddhist saviour figures, such as Amitābha Buddha, Maitreya the 'Future Buddha' and the Bodhisattva Kan'on, also represent quasi-forms of millenarian salvation religions, yet all these beliefs are different to the millenarianism



found in almost all (if not all) Japanese NRMs, which are much closer to the sociological understanding of millenarianism argued for by Cohn (1970). For example, whilst Cohn understands millenarianism to be of an imminent, terrestrial nature, neither the Pure Land of the Pure Land School of Buddhism, nor the World of Maitreya, resemble the idea of the impending arrival of Paradise on earth.

The common explanation for the phenomenon of millenarianism in modern Japan is the 'anomie theory' or 'crisis theory', that is, a context of political oppression, foreign invasion, various kinds of deprivation, including abject poverty and rapid and bewildering social change, characterised in particular by a lack of voice for those suffering such pressures. As a number of 'crisis theorists', such as Blacker and McFarland point out, Japan did undergo extremely difficult periods in its modern history, some of which could be said to have created a context of 'anomie', although, as I have argued in Chapter II, an understanding of the context in which millenarian ideas arise is far from simple. It is also important to note that because McFarland and Blacker were writing in 1967 and 1971 respectively, they offer insights into movements that emerged before the 1970s, but do not address the question I am asking in this thesis, namely why, during a time when Japan was no longer undergoing 'social anomie', numerous 'new' new religions began to emerge and to make significant advances in Japan and abroad. Kofuku-no-Kagaku was established in 1986 and made rapid developments in the late 1980s and the early 1990s when Japan became the second largest economy in the world after the United States. Millenarianism appealed to the members of this Movement, a majority of whom, rather than suffering from an oppressive social context or bewildering social change, like those who lived through the Meiji era or the aftermath of the Second World War, were well-off, well educated professionals with good career prospects. My research material presented in Chapter VI supports this picture.

The motivations for people who joined Japanese NRMs during the 1980s and 1990s are clearly different from those who experienced rapid and bewildering social change in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Japan, or those who lacked virtually all material goods in the periods before and after the Second World War. However, by contrasting the traditional understanding of the context within which millenarianism emerged, it is possible to see that Kofuku-no-Kagaku is spreading a very different kind of millenarian message than that spread, for example, by Omoto.

The survey of the general literature on millenarianism in Chapter II revealed that millenarian ideas do not always emerge in a context of social anomie. The work of



both Cohn (1970) and Harrison (1979) reveal cases where millenarianism appeared, not only amongst the poor and unrepresented, but also amongst those seeking change they were powerless to bring about with the resources available to them. The Franciscan Spiritual Movement, for example, prepared for a spiritual Golden Age, conceived of in the context of overpowering official Church corruption, by abandoning their wealth in favour of poverty and simplicity.

This study has shown the crucial importance of millenarian ideas to the rapid development of Kofuku-no-Kagaku. It appears from my research that Kofuku-no-Kagaku's rapid growth can be explained, at least in part, by the teachings on the path to happiness which are synonymous with its teachings on the Millennium. The Millennium exists within the minds/hearts (*kokoro*) of the members as a tangible and attainable goal of happiness, and when it eventually exists in everyone's mind/heart Kofuku-no-Kagaku's Buddha-land Utopia, which is its Millennium, will have arrived.

I discussed in Chapter V, how all the beliefs and practices of the Movement revolve around the core belief of the bringing about of the Buddha-land Utopia. The Movement teaches that there are two main purposes in life for all human beings on earth, namely soul-training and the establishment of the Utopia, achieved through a process of thousands of reincarnations; a belief which also embraces the idea of the immortality of human life as a spirit. Without accepting this belief system, there would not be much meaning in affiliating to the Movement. Kofuku-no-Kagaku's core doctrines, the 'Principles of Happiness', the 'Quest for the Right Mind' and the 'Spiritual Outlook on Life' are based on this millenarian belief, and are cultivated by strong emphasis on practices of meditation, self-reflection and study, for example.

With knowledge of the 'Buddha's Truth', members believe that they are able to experience 'real happiness'; in the Movement's journals, there are many stories about members who have experienced this 'true happiness'. It is primarily explained in terms of members changing themselves, by obtaining wisdom that is only achieved by studying and practising the Truth; this appears to explain why many members show strong enthusiasm for studying the teachings and are willing to take the Movement's examinations. Self-transformation and obtaining happiness is considered, within the Movement, to be like a small miracle, and the state of 'happiness' and the state of 'enlightenment' are considered to be one and the same thing (Kofuku-no-Kagaku, ed., 1994: 115). The global significance of the Millennium is clear; Okawa has declared:

'Kofuku-no-Kagaku is the only religion that can take such a great responsibility. Kofuku-no-Kagaku is the "Future Religion" that can



enlighten the few billion people in the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and can save people in this world now and in the future, which is more than traditional Christianity and Buddhism can achieve.’ (Okawa, 1999: 226-7)

Kofuku-no-Kagaku’s millenarian belief system also functions to explain the meaning of life and why there is suffering on earth. As well as their pursuit of happiness, the members are needed in a sacred mission to save the entire world, led by the Highest Divine Spirit, El Cantare. As Harrison says of millenarian belief: ‘millenarianism allows the followers to feel part of an important drama that gave much more meaning to their everyday lives than they would otherwise have had’ (Harrison, 1979: 227). The Movement explains that the origin of all suffering is caused by ‘not knowing the Truth’. In this sense, for those who now believe they know the Truth, millenarianism functions as a particular type of language or explanation, and most importantly, as a motivation for salvation of the entire world, in which each and everyone has a role to play. Many members whom I encountered through my research in the past few years were extremely serious about one day establishing the Buddha-land Utopia on earth, and were extremely optimistic and enthusiastic about their activities based on their strong beliefs in their own potential to achieve happiness and spread that happiness to others. In line with Okawa’s declaration of the global significance of his teachings, many members believed that Kofuku-no-Kagaku would become *the* World Religion and they themselves would one day reach the level of ‘angels of light’ or ‘bodhisattvas of light’, and that the particular life they were leading now was especially opportune for such an achievement. One of the high profile members, the author Tamio Kageyama (1947-1998), expressed this view in his book *‘How I Became a Member of the Institute for Research in Human Happiness’* (1992), when he explained how precious it was to have the opportunity to be born at the same time as the Buddha (President Okawa) and to hear his teachings first hand rather than through history (Kageyama, 1992: 157).

In Chapter VII, I considered the appeal of Kofuku-no-Kagaku in the light of members’ own accounts of how they think and feel about the Movement’s millenarian ideas. The research revealed that the teachings and practices of the Movement appeal to people because they give them the tools to change that they cannot get from either their post modern context or conventional religions. It also revealed that it gave them answers to questions they were not able to find elsewhere.

In relation to what members said about their own self-transformation, this came in the form of looking at the world in a new light, with the ‘Right Mind’. Some



members described this as changing an unhappy life into a happy one by gaining control over their mind, and learning to give love instead of take it. Others described a more subtle change where they were not particularly unhappy before they joined the Movement, but had gained a new sense of happiness and meaning in their lives.

In relation to the answers members were looking for, these concerned, for example, the Movement's explanations about cosmology and human history; that humans have a specific purpose to pursue both progress and harmony across the entire universe; and, that the universe works according to specific laws (Kofuku-no-Kagaku ed., 1990: 176-7). This is reflected in the Movement's assertions that what people normally believe to be 'common sense' is not the Buddha's Truth. In 'The Laws of the Sun', Okawa clearly states that the content of the book is 'infinitely mystical' and 'Do not try to rely upon your "common sense" to comprehend it. Rather, I challenge you to transform your common sense with its contents' (Okawa, 1994d: 2; 1966b: Preface).

I have suggested in Chapter VII, that if people are turning to Kofuku-no-Kagaku in order to seek something that society is depriving them of, it appears from the evidence that this is perhaps best described as insufficient internal happiness or well-being. This could be said to conform to 'psychic deprivation' (Glock & Stark, 1971: 248), that is, a deprivation of values. However, I have argued in Chapter VII, that it might perhaps best be described as a deprivation of a different kind, which is new to modern society. One possible name for this deprivation could be 'spiritual deprivation', as my research suggests that Kofuku-no-Kagaku is offering members very specific kinds of values, namely spiritual values.

Kofuku-no-Kagaku is teaching that they can show people the way to a perfect world by renovating their internal and self-understanding. When I interviewed one of the branch managers in Europe, he told me that salvation for the Movement does not mean survival of a physical body. He explained that the concept of the term 'salvation' in Kofuku-no-Kagaku is understood as follows:

'Salvation in Kofuku-no-Kagaku is to let people realise what the real way of human life is, that is, realisation of spirituality on earth. However, if you have no physical body, you cannot learn how to practise this on earth, in this sense we never neglect the life on earth with a physical body. But physical survival per se is not the prime purpose of our activities at Kofuku-no-Kagaku, it's salvation of the soul.'<sup>1</sup>

According to Kofuku-no-Kagaku, to live without realising the real purpose of human life and without holding a spiritual worldview is the problem, and people who do

---

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Mr Tsuchida, London, 30<sup>th</sup> July 1997.



not have such knowledge in the modern world are those who need to be saved. President Okawa explains that when prophets appeared on earth in the Old Testament, it was always at times of crisis (Okawa, 1993a: 38). The crisis that Kofuku-no-Kagaku sees modern society to be in, is caused by, for example, materialism and atheism which, according to the Movement, make humans believe that death is the end of everything, and this in turn makes people more attached to earthly values, such as social status and life on earth. Okawa also says, however, that 'the time of crisis is at the same time the time of hope' (ibid., 38), hence the immediate need for El Cantare and his teachings. The crisis that Okawa sees in this world is, therefore, not of a political or economic kind, nor one of rapid and bewildering social change; the crisis Okawa is referring to is of a spiritual kind.

The focus on internal rather than external change provides an interesting contrast with the earlier Japanese NRMs, and in particular Omoto, and in this thesis I have also attempted to show how the millenarian vision of Kofuku-no-Kagaku resembles and differs from that of other Japanese NRMs, both historical and contemporary. For example, in Chapter VIII, I compared and contrasted it with Omoto, a 19<sup>th</sup> Century Movement, and GLA, a 20<sup>th</sup> Century Movement.

An analysis of the Millennium in Kofuku-no-Kagaku reveals that it is primarily concerned with the world of the mind/heart, and that although worldly progress, such as economic prosperity, is considered to be a good thing and necessary for the Millennium to arrive, its main focus is internal. By contrast, Omoto rebelled against the way the modern world was organised, and the way the modern imperial system worked, and sought to replace 'evil' external structures with its own Perfect World. Omoto was therefore a movement borne of modernisation and frustration, poverty and rapid industrial and social change. Kofuku-no-Kagaku is not born of that, as most of the members are relatively well-off and comfortable. While Omoto's Millennium was concerned primarily with material consideration, and with reclaiming people's status, skills and attributes that had been undermined by a new system, Kofuku-no-Kagaku offers a Millennium that addresses dissatisfaction with the values of the modern world, and offers a clear purpose beyond the acquisition of material wealth.

Kofuku-no-Kagaku also complains about external structures as it criticises NRMs it considers are misleading people, particular sections of the media, and often addresses political, ethical and educational issues, for example. However, Kofuku-no-Kagaku is not saving people who are crushed by the weight of material poverty or



bewildering social change, but those who are seeking an inner-self that is stabilised, made secure and contented.

It appears to be the case that my sample members reflected the same kind of feelings as the wider Japanese society. Figures from NHK's survey published in 1984 suggest that people believe their problems cannot be solved by economic achievements or technological development. In the survey, 73 per cent of the Japanese said they did not consider that science could provide solutions to all their problems, and 76 per cent did not see that scientific progress necessarily guaranteed happiness (NHK, 1984: 93-5). In 1993, only 33 per cent of the Japanese declared their faith in religion, however, over 70 per cent still considered that having a religious mind or a religious way of thinking was important (Ishii, 1997: 7). These figures, like the evidence from my research, suggest that people are facing problems of a more mental or spiritual kind, because if the problems were purely material, they would have been solved by economic growth. It appears that, like the 7<sup>th</sup> Century Chinese scholar, *Kan-tsu* 管子, who said 'Man is able to learn proprieties only when he has something to wear and eat', when people began to have less need to worry about food in their stomachs by the 1970s and 1980s in Japan, this was also the moment when a number of 'new' new religions were established, and also flourished. This would also seem to reflect the results of research conducted in 1981 by NHK<sup>2</sup> (published in 1984), where 65 per cent of those respondents who claimed to be extremely satisfied with their lives also claimed the necessity of religious faith, whilst only 35 per cent of those who claimed not to be satisfied with their lives claimed the necessity of religious faith (NHK, 1984: 103; Ishii, 1997: 49). Similarly, 79 per cent of those who were extremely satisfied with their lives claimed that religion was necessary, whereas 56 per cent of those who were not satisfied made the same claim (NHK, 1984: 102). These results suggest that those people who are more satisfied with their lives in modern society tend to be more religious in orientation, and, in many ways, provide an antithesis to the more established millenarian theories including the popular 'anomie' or 'crisis' theories concerning the rise of new religions.

After Japan became an economic giant, people must have gained a substantial amount of prosperity, and some sociologists, such as Ishii, observe that in return for a prosperous society, people lost their objectives in life, which caused them to become psychologically unstable, and subsequently led them towards more religious interests (Ishii, 1997: 49). If this analysis is correct, then it sheds further light on how

---

<sup>2</sup> See: 'The Religious Consciousness of the Japanese' (日本人の宗教意識), NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation), 1984.



millenarianism can be derived either from a context of social anomie or from an economically advanced and satisfied one. Again, the common thread is not anomie, but a need for change.

In this thesis I also considered how Kofuku-no-Kagaku's teaching on the approach of the Millennium has altered over time, and how this has affected its rapid growth. I have shown that from 1986 to 1994 there was a strong emphasis on the imminence of the Apocalypse. Discussion on the Apocalypse was at its height in the Movement in 1991, and this coincided with particularly rapid growth in the membership figures issued by the Movement, illustrated in Table 1, (p.137) and also by my research in Table 5, (p.150). For example, the membership figure issued by the Movement in July 1991 was 1.5 million, and by the end of the same year this figure had risen to 5.6 million, and of the 164 members who took part in my questionnaire survey, the largest percentage, 22.6 per cent, joined in 1991. It is possible to see from this that when the Movement's apocalyptic message was at its height, around 1991, the membership rose significantly.

During 1994 and 1995 emphasis on the Apocalypse was still present, but it had begun to shift. In Chapter IV I discussed the history and development of Kofuku-no-Kagaku and how, in its relatively short history, the Movement has undergone many changes as it spread its message across Japan and beyond. The status of President Okawa, for example, has changed as he was initially understood to be the 'Enlightened One' and the reincarnation of Shakyamuni the Buddha, but is now understood to be the embodiment of the Highest Divine Spirit, El Cantare, who is also the Eternal Buddha. One of the most significant shifts in teaching, however, concerns its emphasis on the Apocalypse. This shift, which began in 1994, coincided with the Movement's move away from what it regarded as 'Minor Heaven' elements, discussed in detail in Chapter IV (p.78-81). Minor Heaven referred to those elements of its teachings that had initially embraced many different spiritual figures, including Moses, Takahashi, Founder of GLA, and Nostradamus. With this new concept of Minor Heaven, which was understood as dangerous, heretical and evil, the Movement distanced itself from its early eclectic approach, and this included the apocalyptic prophecies of Nostradamus. From 1994, Minor Heaven elements in its ideas were explained as wrong and dangerous forms of faith, almost equivalent to religions of 'Hell', that did not belong in a 'right' religion of 'Major Heaven', and were all but completely removed from the Movement's belief system. Thus, at the same time that discussion on the Minor Heaven elements in the Movement were discouraged, so was talk of the Apocalypse. The Movement also



put an increased emphasis on its Buddhist identity at this time, and devotion to the Three Jewels of the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha became of ultimate importance.

Kofuku-no-Kagaku explained its shift by saying that some ex-GLA members understood Kofuku-no-Kagaku to be the successor Movement to GLA, and this had to be corrected (Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly, No.87, 5/1994: 7-9). It is probably the case, however, that another reason why Kofuku-no-Kagaku changed in this way was a response to criticism that it had nothing original to offer, and was in fact borrowing its ideas from others, most notably GLA. It was also, at this time, criticised for being too nationalistic, and in moving away from discussions on its 'Minor Heaven' elements, including Nostradamus and talk of the Apocalypse, it was able to distance itself from both these accusations.

What is also clear from an analysis of the Movement's history is that it was at this time that Kofuku-no-Kagaku perhaps came of age, as it asserted itself with a clearer identity, abandoning many spiritual figures in favour of emphasis on El Cantare, and two other figures that still remain very important to the Movement, Shakyamuni the Buddha and Hermes, the god of Greek mythology.

Despite the fact that talk of the Apocalypse was discouraged around 1994, it was not until 1996 that a clear shift emerged. For example, in 1994 Kofuku-no-Kagaku released its first feature film, 'The Terrifying Revelations of Nostradamus', which reached a large audience. The apocalyptic message in the film was explicit and graphic; the threat of nuclear wars, the disappearance of continents and a, so called, 'pole shift' were shown to be near at hand as the year 1999 approached. Then, in 1995, the terrible earthquake that hit Osaka and Kobe in January, and the sarin gas attack on the Tokyo underground by Aum Shinrikyō in March again brought back discussion of the Apocalypse.

In 1996, however, the year the Director of the International Division, Mr Yuki Oikawa, calls 'the great shift year', emphasis shifted completely away from the Apocalypse and towards a positive future, and around this time the membership figures seem to suggest that numbers were levelling out, as the size of the membership has not been updated since around this time. According to Mr Oikawa, until this shift, Kofuku-no-Kagaku was still making 'dynamic developments', supported by rather flamboyant activities, largely as a result of the evangelical fire of enthusiastic members, much inspired by the sense of imminence in the Apocalypse. However, after 1996, or to be more exact, after Okawa's lecture entitled '*The Heart that Believes in the Future*', in



June 1996, Kofuku-no-Kagaku and its members ceased discussions on the Apocalypse and focussed on a more positive outlook for the future.<sup>3</sup> There had always been some hope that the Apocalypse would never happen, even before 1994, as there was always the possibility if people behaved in a certain way, according to the 'Buddha's Truth', that the Apocalypse might be avoided. However, after 1996, the stress was much more consistently on the Utopia. Around the same time the Movement also ceased publicly announcing the size of its membership, holding grand festivities at such venues as Tokyo Dome Stadium and President Okawa stopped giving large public lectures.

The reason for this shift given by President Okawa was that if too many people thought about a negative future, they might actually create it through the creative power of thought. Mr Yuki Oikawa also explained to me that because the Movement's dynamic developments had finished by 1996, there was no longer any need to spread the Movement's warnings of imminent disaster.<sup>4</sup>

It is possible to speculate, from the context in Japan at this time, that another reason why this change took place may relate to the changing mood towards NRMs, especially after the series of Aum incidents. It seems that, not unlike its initial shift away from the Apocalypse in 1994, Kofuku-no-Kagaku wanted to distance itself from other NRMs. This context is illustrated in a survey conducted in 1995, which showed that 60.1 per cent of the Japanese believed new religions were 'preoccupied with moneymaking' and 45.9 per cent believed they used 'coercive methods of recruitment' (Ishii, 1997: 152-3). This can be contrasted with their views on traditional religion, as 51.1 per cent understood it to be concerned with the 'mind and spirit' (ibid., 152-3). This hostile view of NRMs had its origins, to some extent, in the actions of Aum, and as Ishii noted, such views of NRMs were fuelled by the mass media (ibid., 153). In such a context, it is possible to conclude that Kofuku-no-Kagaku sought to separate itself from the negative image of NRMs, and that its more low key activities also reflected a need to present a more low key image. It is also possible to speculate, too, that as 1999 approached, it was necessary to reduce the sense of imminence in the Apocalypse, in case the predictions did not materialise.

It appears that this change has impacted on membership in a negative way, as the figures suggest that Kofuku-no-Kagaku's appeal when it put emphasis on its apocalyptic message was stronger than it is now. However, while it appears that getting new members has changed, from my participant observation I noticed that the sense of

---

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Mr Yuki Oikawa, Tokyo, 19 December 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.



affiliation amongst existing members was still very strong. According to the survey results from my fieldwork, it was clear that some people considered that the apocalyptic phase might still arrive, but my research revealed that most members were optimistic about the future, in line with the Movement's new approach. Now that the 20<sup>th</sup> Century has passed, virtually no one speaks of the Apocalypse in Kofuku-no-Kagaku anymore, at least not publicly. However, many members still appeared as enthusiastic about their involvement with the Movement as they were before 1999; they still introduced their friends to the Movement, and were ambitious about completing, what they called, their 'mission' on earth. According to Festinger et al. in their well-known book *'When Prophecy Fails'*, (1964) after millenarian predictions fail in a religion, core members actually become more convinced about their faith and more eager in their activities. They observed that a follower is likely to be 'not only unshaken, but even more convinced of the truth of his beliefs than ever before' (Festinger et al., 1964: 3). Although my fieldwork did not reveal any members of Kofuku-no-Kagaku whose confidence and beliefs were badly affected by the Movement's shift in relation to the Apocalypse, at the same time, during my participant observation at this time, I also did not encounter any members who said they became more convinced of Okawa's teachings after the predictions did not fully materialise either.

According to Mr Yuki Oikawa, in place of apocalyptic expectation, the enthusiasm of the members is now generated by spiritual experiences, derived in particular from Kofuku-no-Kagaku's temples, called *Shōja* or *Shōshin-kan*. The first main temple was opened in 1996; the same year that discussion of the Apocalypse was officially brought to an end. In the Movement's temples there is no mood of imminence at all. According to Mr Oikawa, instead of revelations detailing impending catastrophe, or invitations for people to listen to public lectures given by President Okawa to vast audiences, one of the main tasks of members today is to bring their friends to its temples to let them experience a spiritual state.<sup>5</sup> When members talk to non-members about their beliefs in Kofuku-no-Kagaku and its objectives, they do not talk about the end of time anymore because it has become 'irrelevant to the way Kofuku-no-Kagaku is developing today'.<sup>6</sup> The members now concentrate on the significance of having been born on earth at the same time as, what they believe to be, the Reincarnated Buddha or the Lord El Cantare, also known as the 'Parent of Souls', to be born at what is

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.



understood to be such an extremely precious and rare time is considered to be a miracle within the Movement.

Since Kofuku-no-Kagaku shifted the emphasis away from apocalyptic expectation, it is clear that the Movement has moved to a different stage of its development. Its rather dynamic image has been removed as its grand, large scale festivals are no longer held; Okawa has stopped giving public lectures and now only gives them in front of high ranking disciples; the number of publications issued by the Movement has reduced from between one to three books each month between 1987 and 1989 (Niju-isseiki ed., 1991, 66) to one or two books each year; the size of the membership that the Movement was willing to declare during its early years has not been updated since 1996; and, Kofuku-no-Kagaku's main religious activity is now to provide religious training at its major temples and retreat centres.

During my research into the nature, characteristics and belief system of the Millennium in Kofuku-no-Kagaku, the more I looked into this socio-religious and in many ways psychological phenomenon, the more I realised that what at first sight might have looked like phantasy was in fact not explained by that term at all. Millenarianism is, in fact, a very specific way of looking at, as well as understanding, the whole world, and people who sincerely embrace this worldview could be said to be using it as a form of communication to express their need for happiness and an understanding of the Truth. It is also an expression of what is wrong with the present world, and what in society needs to be completely overturned. By focusing on the Millennium in Kofuku-no-Kagaku, my aim was to find out what its distinctive elements were, and how, if it is a product of modern Japanese society, it could be said to reflect the aspirations and fears of that society.

As Clarke observes, virtually all Japanese NRMs are millenarian in orientation (Clarke, 1994: 4; 1999: 14), and this highlights the fact that many people in modern Japanese society are seeking change in large numbers. A study of Kofuku-no-Kagaku's Millennium has revealed that its appeal centres around its teachings which help people to find happiness. What began as a mere study group that started in 1986, became a religious movement that managed to attract a large following which it demonstrated very tangibly in 1991 by filling a baseball stadium with 50,000 people. The activities engaged in by the Movement have altered over time, and have included the release of a number of large budget feature films, various demonstrations in the streets, and criticism against the mass media and other 'heretical' and 'evil' NRMs, because the Movement believes that they mislead people. It has also undergone a dramatic shift in



its millenarian ideas, by shifting emphasis away from its graphic predictions of catastrophe, and displaying a whole new character as it dropped its dynamic image of the early 1990s and stressed the importance of positive thinking, and the role of spiritual experiences as its new activity and method of spreading its message. Despite the various changes in its relatively short history, however, the thread that has run through all its history has been its emphasis on creating the Buddha-land Utopia, brought about through the self-transformation of its members, a self-transformation which makes its Utopia not just a concept but a reality for those who have used its teachings to change themselves.



# Appendix I

## Questionnaire Survey

1. Branch office location: .....
2. Sex: ☐ male ☐ female
3. Age: .....
4. Marital status: ☐ married ☐ single
5. Year of joining: .....
6. Age at joining: .....
7. Occupation:
 

<input type="checkbox"/> Civil servant	<input type="checkbox"/> Salary Man	<input type="checkbox"/> Company owner
<input type="checkbox"/> Self-employed	<input type="checkbox"/> Work at NPO	<input type="checkbox"/> Housewife (full-time)
<input type="checkbox"/> Voluntary worker	<input type="checkbox"/> Professional	<input type="checkbox"/> Artist
<input type="checkbox"/> Domestic helper	<input type="checkbox"/> Part-time worker	<input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed
<input type="checkbox"/> Student	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
- 7a. If student:
 

<input type="checkbox"/> Junior high	<input type="checkbox"/> High school	<input type="checkbox"/> University
<input type="checkbox"/> Post graduate	<input type="checkbox"/> Technical college	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Rōnin</i> (University re-application year)
8. Final education completed:
 

<input type="checkbox"/> Junior high	<input type="checkbox"/> High school	<input type="checkbox"/> University
<input type="checkbox"/> Post graduate	<input type="checkbox"/> Technical college	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
- 8a. Post graduate level:
 

<input type="checkbox"/> Masters	<input type="checkbox"/> Ph.D	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
----------------------------------	-------------------------------	--------------------------------
9. What was the principal trigger that made you decide to join Kofuku-no-Kagaku?:
 

<input type="checkbox"/> Reading IRH literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Attending President Okawa's lectures	<input type="checkbox"/> Attending Branch events
<input type="checkbox"/> Attending local team meetings	<input type="checkbox"/> Listening to IRH lecture tapes	<input type="checkbox"/> Watching lecture videos
<input type="checkbox"/> The influence of a friend	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
10. What was your principal reason or motive for joining?:
 

<input type="checkbox"/> To solve problems	<input type="checkbox"/> To develop/improve myself	<input type="checkbox"/> To be more religious
<input type="checkbox"/> Interested in meditation	<input type="checkbox"/> Interested in spirit world	<input type="checkbox"/> Improve religious understanding/pursue enlightenment
<input type="checkbox"/> For happiness of others	<input type="checkbox"/> Not to fall into hell	<input type="checkbox"/> To change/transform the world
<input type="checkbox"/> Pursue meaning of life	<input type="checkbox"/> To comfort ancestors' spirits	<input type="checkbox"/> For this-worldly/material benefit ( <i>riyaku</i> )
<input type="checkbox"/> No specific reason	<input type="checkbox"/> I was searching for something	<input type="checkbox"/> Other



11. What was your interest in/sympathy to religion and religious issues before joining?:

- ☐ Not interested at all      ☐ Had a limited amount of interest      ☐ Not very interested
- ☐ Had a very strong interest

12. Did you have a belief in God, Buddha, spirits, the world after death and reincarnation before joining?:

- ☐ No belief whatsoever      ☐ Not interested, as I thought it was impossible to know
- ☐ Had a vague idea about such things      ☐ Had a limited amount of belief
- ☐ Had a very strong belief

13. Did you have any religious affiliation before joining?

- ☐ Yes      ☐ No

13a. If yes, what kind of religion?

- ☐ Christianity      ☐ Buddhism      ☐ Shinto
- ☐ Other religions or religious movements      ☐ Other

13b. If yes, what was the name of the religion or movement? E.g. Catholic Church, True Pure Land School of Buddhism, Seichō-no-Ie, etc.

-----

14. Describe your religious life before joining?

- ☐ Visited temples/shrines at New Year
- ☐ Took part in ancestor worship/comfort in *Obon* season
- ☐ Sometimes visited religious sites, such as shrines, temples or churches  
(How often?: ☐ Very often    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Occasionally )
- ☐ Liked visiting religious sites, but not for religious reasons
- ☐ Prayed at home  
(How often?: ☐ Very often    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Occasionally )
- ☐ Was superstitious
- ☐ Often read religious books/writings
- ☐ Often thought about God/Buddha
- ☐ Often thought about ancestors or those who had died
- ☐ Joined religious activities  
(How often?: ☐ Very often    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Occasionally )
- ☐ Talked about religion/spiritual matters
- ☐ Didn't have any religious customs at all
- ☐ Took part in charity/voluntary work
- ☐ Other



**15. What are the principal attractions of Kofuku-no-Kagaku?**

- ☐ Doctrine  
☐ Messages and guidance from the spirits ('Spiritual Messages' published by IRH)  
☐ Predictions  
 (What kind?: ☐ Apocalyptic ☐ Concerning Utopia ☐ Concerning the distant future of humanity)
- ☐ Style of faith/belief  
☐ Devotion to the Three Jewels  
☐ Miracles  
☐ Study meetings held at local branch offices  
☐ Master Okawa's lectures  
☐ Religious training, such as meditation and self-reflection  
☐ IRH's religious practice, such as 'El Cantare Fight' and 'El Cantare Healing'  
☐ Master Okawa himself  
☐ Staff members  
☐ Ordinary members  
☐ Various religious festivals/prayer sessions  
 (What kind?: ☐ Birthday festival ☐ El Cantare festival ☐ Thanksgiving  
☐ Hermes festival ☐ Prayer for academic achievement ☐ Prayer for success finding a partner  
☐ Prayer for traffic safety ☐ Prayer for healing ☐ Prayer for economic prosperity  
☐ Ancestor worship festival, for comforting the souls of departed family members)
- ☐ Spiritual phenomena that has occurred within IRH  
☐ Nothing in particular  
☐ Other

**16. What doctrines appeal to you?**

- ☐ Teaching on 'Love that Gives' ☐ Self-reflection (Eightfold path) ☐ Enlightenment  
☐ Structure of Spirit World ☐ Theories for success ☐ Cosmology  
☐ UFOs ☐ Happiness ☐ Multi-dimensional structure of world  
☐ Explanation of human history ☐ Explanation of Buddhist Doctrine ☐ Spirit messages  
☐ Predictions ☐ Spiritual phenomena ☐ Spiritual outlook on life  
☐ Positive thinking ☐ 'Invincible thinking' ☐ Tendency of unhappy life  
☐ Immortal life ☐ Reincarnation ☐ Harmony in relationships  
☐ How to utilise one's time ☐ Meaning of life ☐ Fourfold path (Principles of Happiness)  
☐ Meditation ☐ Utopia ☐ Karma  
☐ Prayer ☐ Ancestor comfort and worship ☐ Meaning of missionary work  
☐ Other



17. What are your two most important Kofuku-no-Kagaku books?  
1. .... 2. ....
18. How often do you join Kofuku-no-Kagaku activities at your local branch office?  
☐ Once a year or less      ☐ A few times a year      ☐ 1 – 2 times a month  
☐ Once a week      ☐ A few times a week
19. Do you think you are developing (religiously, spiritually or as a person)?  
☐ Through local branch office activities  
How much?:    ☐ Not at all    ☐ I think so    ☐ Very much so  
☐ Through missionary activities  
How much?:    ☐ Not at all    ☐ I think so    ☐ Very much so  
☐ Through self-study and practice of the teachings  
How much?:    ☐ Not at all    ☐ I think so    ☐ Very much so  
☐ Through training at major temples  
How much?:    ☐ Not at all    ☐ I think so    ☐ Very much so
20. Do you think Kofuku-no-Kagaku is developing?  
☐ Through local branch office activities  
How much?:    ☐ Not at all    ☐ I think so    ☐ Very much so  
☐ Through missionary activities  
How much?:    ☐ Not at all    ☐ I think so    ☐ Very much so  
☐ Through members' self-study and practice of the teachings  
How much?:    ☐ Not at all    ☐ I think so    ☐ Very much so  
☐ Through training at major temples  
How much?:    ☐ Not at all    ☐ I think so    ☐ Very much so
21. What is your attitude in relation to the end of the Century (the impending Apocalypse)?  
☐ Looking forward to it      ☐ Extremely scared      ☐ Do not care at all  
☐ A little worried, but have hope    ☐ Don't know
22. Have you changed since you joined?  
☐ Changed a lot      ☐ Changed a little      ☐ Haven't changed much  
☐ Haven't changed at all    ☐ Don't know
23. If yes, how have you changed? (E.g. I've become more positive)  
.....  
.....
24. Kofuku-no-Kagaku teaches how to obtain 'true happiness'. Since joining, have you experienced this happiness, and if so, when?  
.....  
.....
25. Is there anything you want to say to about Kofuku-no-Kagaku? (Free comment)  
.....  
.....



## Bibliography

- Arita, Yoshifu (1991), ‘“Kofuku-no-Kagaku” o Kagaku-suru’, Tenzan Shuppan, Tokyo
- Arweck, Elizabeth and Clarke, Peter B. (1997), *New Religious Movements in Western Europe: An Annotated Bibliography*, Greenwood, Westport
- Asahi Shimbun (ed.) (1995), *AERA Mook: Shūkyō-gaku ga Wakaru*, Asahi Shimbun Extra Report and Analysis Special, No.11, Asahi Shimbun-sha (The Daily Asahi Publishing Corporation), Tokyo
- Asahi Shimbun (ed.) (2000), *Japan Almanac 2001*, Asahi Shimbun-sha, Tokyo
- Asahi Shimbun (ed.) (2001), *Japan Almanac 2002*, Asahi Shimbun-sha, Tokyo
- Astley, Trevor (1995), *The Transformation of a Recent Japanese New Religion: Okawa Ryūho and Kofuku no Kagaku*, in *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol.22, Nos.3-4, pp.343-80
- Babbie, Earl and Halley, Fred (1994), *Adventures in Social Research: Data Analysis Using SPSS*, Pine Forge Press, California
- Bainbridge, William Sims and Stark, Rodney (1985), see: Stark, R. and Bainbridge, W.S., 1985
- Barker, Eileen (1984), *The Making of a Moonie: Brainwashing of Choice?*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford
- Barker, Eileen (1995), *New Religious Movements: A Practical Introduction*, HMSO, London
- Barker, Eileen (1999), *New Religious Movements: Their Incidence and Significance*, in Wilson, B.R. and Cresswell, J. (eds.) (1999), pp.15-31
- Beckford, James A. (ed.) (1986), *New Religious Movements and Rapid Social Change*, SAGE/UNESCO, Paris and London
- Bellah, Robert N. (1985), *Tokugawa Religion: The Cultural Roots of Modern Japan*, Free Press, London and New York
- Berger, Peter L. (1982), *Sociology Reinterpreted: An Essay on Method and Vocation*, Penguin, Middlesex
- Blacker, Carmen (1971), *Millenarian Aspects of the New Religions in Japan*, in Shiveley, D.H. (ed.), *Tradition and Modernisation in Japanese Culture*, Princeton University Press, Ch.XIV, pp.563-600
- Blacker, Carmen (1986), *The Catalpa Bow: A Study of Shamanistic Practices in Japan*, Unwin Hyman, London
- Bragt, Jan van (1998), *Apocalyptic Thought in Christianity and Buddhism*, in *Japanese Religions*, Vol.23, Nos.1 & 2 January 1998, NCC Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions, Kyoto, pp.11-28
- Bunka-chō, The Agency for Cultural Affairs (ed.) (1997), *Shūkyō Nenkan* (Religion Almanac), Heisei 8 (1996) edition, Gyōsei, Tokyo
- Bunka-chō, The Agency for Cultural Affairs (ed.) (1998), *Shūkyō Nenkan*, Heisei 9 (1997) edition, Gyōsei, Tokyo
- Byrne, Peter (1991), *Religion and the Religions*, in Clarke P.B. and Sutherland S. (eds.), 1991, Ch.1
- Clarke, Peter B. (ed.) (1987), *The New Evangelists: Recruitment Methods & Aims of New Religious Movements*, Ethnographica, London
- Clarke, Peter B. and Sutherland, Stewart (eds.) (1991), *The World's Religions: The Study of Religion, Traditional and New Religion*, Routledge, London
- Clarke, Peter B. and Puttick, Elizabeth (eds.) (1993), *Women as Teachers and Disciples in Traditional and New Religions*, Studies in Women and Religion, Volume 32, Edwin Mellens Press, Lampeter



- Clarke, Peter B. and Somers, Jeffrey (eds.) (1994), *'Japanese New Religions in the West'*, Japan Library/Curzon Press, Kent
- Clarke, Peter B. (1994), *'Japanese 'New' and 'New, New' Religions: An Introduction'*, in Clarke, P.B. and Somers, J. (eds.), 1994, Ch.1
- Clarke, Peter B. (1997), *'Change and Variety in New Religious Movements in Western Europe, c.1960 to the Present'*, in Arweck, E. and Clarke, P.B., 1997
- Clarke, Peter B. (ed.) (1999), *'A Bibliography of Japanese New Religious Movements: With Annotations and an Introduction to Japanese New Religions at Home and Abroad'*, Japan Library/Curzon Press, Surrey
- Clarke, Peter B. (ed.) (2000), *'Japanese New Religions: In Global Perspective'*, Curzon Press, Surrey
- Clarke, Peter B. (2000b), *'The Encounter between 'New' Religion and 'Old' religion with Special Reference to Soka Gakkai in Brazil'*, in *'Dialog und Unterscheidung: Religionen und religiöse bewegungen im Gespräch'*, EZW-Texte 2000, 151 Sonderausgabe, pp.251-9
- Cohn, Norman (1970), *'The Pursuit of the Millennium - Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages'*, Temple Smith, London
- Cohn, Norman (1995), *'Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come: The Ancient Roots of Apocalyptic Faith'*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London
- Cornille, Catherine (2000), *'New Japanese Religions in the West: Between Nationalism and Universalism'*, in Clarke, P.B. (ed.), 2000
- Cresswell, Jamie and Wilson, Bryan R. (eds.) (1999), see: Wilson, B.R. and Cresswell, J., 1999
- Davis, Winston (1992), *'Japanese Religion and Society: Paradigms of Structure and Change'*, State University of New York Press, Part II, Ch.2, 'World Renewal (Yonaoshi)', New York, pp.57-62
- Dobbelaere, Karel and Wilson, Bryan R. (1994), see: Wilson, B. R. and Dobbelaere, K., 1994
- Durkheim, Emile (1995), *'The Elementary Forms of Religious Life'*, translated and with an introduction by Karen E. Fields, Free Press (Simon & Schuster), New York
- Eliade, Mircea (ed.) (1987), *'The Encyclopaedia of Religion'*, Macmillan, London and New York
- Festinger, Leon; Riecken, Henry W.; Schachter, Stanley (1964), *'When Prophecy Fails: A Social and Psychological Study of a Modern Group that Predicted the Destruction of the World'*, Harper Torchbooks, New York
- Freud, Sigmund (1978), *'The Future of an Illusion'*, translated by W.D. Robson-Scott, revised and newly edited by James Strachey, Hogarth Press, London
- Fukui, Masaki (1999), *'Kofuku-no-Kagaku: The Institute for Research in Human Happiness (IRH)'*, in Clarke, P.B. (ed.), 1999, pp.149-67
- Gendai Sereniti Kenkyūkai (1992), *'"Kōfuku-no-Kagaku" Genshō o Ou: Shinjidai no Keiji Shūkyō'*, Mainichi Shimbun-sha (The Daily Mainichi), Tokyo
- Giddens, Anthony (1993), *'Sociology'*, 2nd ed., Polity Press, Cambridge, Ch.14
- Glock, Charles Y. and Stark, Rodney (1971), *'On the Origins and Evolution of Religious Groups'* in Glock C. and Stark R., *'Religion and Society in Tension'*, Rand McNally, Chicago, pp.242-259
- Gombrich, Richard F. (1988), *'Theravāda Buddhism: A Social History from Ancient Benares to Modern Colombo'*, Routledge, London
- Goto, Ben (1991a), *'Nostradamus no Dai-yogen: Semarikuru 1999-nen 7-no-tsuki, Jinrui Metsubo-no Hi (The Great Prophecies of Nostradamus: The Impending Seventh Month of 1999, the Day of the Total Annihilation of the Human Race)'*, 446<sup>th</sup> ed., Non Book 55, Shōden-sha, Tokyo (originally published in 1973)



- Goto, Ben (1991b), *'Nostradamus no Dai-yogen II: 1999-nen no Hakyoku o Fukanō-ni suru Grand Cross'*, Non Book 161, Shōden-sha, Tokyo (originally published in 1979)
- Goto, Ben (1991c), *'Nostradamus no Dai-yogen - Nippon-hen: Jinrui no Metsubō o Suku nowa Hi-no-Kuni da'*, Non Book 280, Shōden-sha, Tokyo (originally published in 1987)
- Goto, Ben (1998), *'Nostradamus no Dai-yogen - Saishu Kaito-hen: 1999-nen "Kyōfu no Dai-O" no Shōtai to Saigo no Katsuro'*, Non Book 400, Shōden-sha, Tokyo
- Hamilton, Malcolm B. (1995), *'The Sociology of Religion: Theoretical and Comparative Perspective'*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London
- Hardy, Friedhelm (ed.) (1990), *'The World's Religions: The Religions of Asia'*, Routledge, London
- Hardacre, Helen (1988), *'Kurozumikyō and the New Religions of Japan'*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey
- Hardacre, Helen and Sponberg, Alan (eds.) (1988), *'Maitreya, the Future Buddha'*, see: Sponberg, A. and Hardacre, H. (eds.), 1988
- Harrison, John Fletcher Clews (1979), *'The Second Coming - Popular Millenarianism 1780-1850'*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, Part III, Ch.8: *'Through a Glass, Darkly'*
- Heelas, Paul (1996), *'The New Age Movement: The Celebration of the Self and the Secularization of Modernity'*, Blackwell, Oxford
- Hewitt, V.J. and Lorie, Peter (1991), *'Nostradamus: The End of the Millennium, Prophecies 1992-2001'*, Simon & Schuster, New York
- Hikaku-shūkyō Kenkyū-kai (ed.) (1995), *'Machigai Darake no Shūkyō Erabi: Jakyō Hihan Manual'*, Vol.1, IRH Press, Tokyo
- Inoue, Nobutaka (1992), *'Shin-Shūkyō no Kaidoku'*, Chikuma Shobō, Tokyo
- Inoue, Nobutaka et al. (eds.) (1994), *'Shin-Shūkyō Jiten'*, Kōbundō, Tokyo
- Inoue, Nobutaka, Nishiyama, Shigeru et al. (eds.) (1996), *'Shin Shūkyō Kyōdan-Jinbutsu Jiten'*, Kōbundō, Tokyo
- Inoue, Nobutaka (ed.) (1997a), *'Sekai no Shūkyō 101 Monogatari'*, Shinshokan, Tokyo
- Inoue, Nobutaka (1997b), *'"Shin, Shin Shūkyō" Gainen no Gakujutsu-teki Yūkōsei ni Tsuite'*, in *'Shūkyō to Shakai'*, 1997/6, Vol.3, Shūkyō to Shakai Gakkai, Tokyo, pp.3-24
- Ishii, Kenji (1997), *'Data Book: Gendai Nippon-jin no Shūkyō: Sengo 50-nen no Shūkyō-ishiki to Shūkyō-katsudō'*, Shin'yō-sha, Tokyo
- Kageyama, Tamio (1992), *'Watashiwa Ikanishite Kofuku-no-Kagaku no Sei-kaiin to Nattaka: How I Became a Member of the Institute for Research in Human Happiness'*, Ota Shuppan, Tokyo
- Kaplan, David E. and Marshall, Andrew (1996), *'The Cult at the End of the World: The Incredible Story of Aum'*, Hutchinson, London
- Kashio, Naoki (1997), *'Sūkyō Mahikari'*, in Inoue (ed.), 1997a, p.207
- Kinsley, David R. (1993), *'Hinduism - A Cultural Perspective'*, 2nd ed., Prentice Hall, New York
- Kisala, Robert (1995), *'Aum Alone in Japan: Religious Response to the "Aum Affair"'*, in *'Bulletin of the Nanzan Institute for Religions & Culture'*, No.19, Spring 1995, Nanzan Institute for Religions and Culture, Nagoya, pp.6-34
- Kisala, Robert (1998), *'1999 and Beyond: The Use of Nostradamus' Prophecies by Japanese New Religions'*, in *'Japanese Religions'*, Vol.23, Nos.1 & 2 January 1998, NCC (The National Christian Council, Japan) Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions, Kyoto, pp.143-57



- Kōdansha-Friday Zenkoku Higaisha-no-kai (ed.) (1995), *'Manga: Kibō no Kakumei'*, IRH Press, Tokyo, Chapter II
- Kofuku-no-Kagaku Kōhō-kyoku (IRH Department of the Public Information) (ed.) (1995a), *'Aum Shinrikyō Bokumetsu Sakusen! Seikyō ni yoru Jyakyō Hihan: Gendai no "Oedo Sōsa-mō"'*, IRH Press, Tokyo
- Kofuku-no-Kagaku Kōhō-kyoku (IRH Department of the Public Information) (ed.) (1995b), *'Yoi Shūkyō, Warui Shūkyō: Imakoso Seija no Senbetsu o'*, IRH Press, Tokyo
- Kofuku-no-Kagaku Kōhō-kyoku (IRH Department of the Public Information) (ed.) (1995c), *'Genron no Jiyū to Shinkyō no Jiyū: Mass-comi wa Gendai no Sei-iki ka?'*, IRH Press, Tokyo
- Kofuku-no-Kagaku Sōgō-honbu (IRH Headquarters) (ed.) (1990), *'Kofuku-no-Kagaku 3-shūnen Kinen-shi: 1986-89'* (*'Kofuku-no-Kagaku: Commemorative Book on its Third Anniversary 1986-89'*), IRH Headquarters, Tokyo
- Kofuku-no-Kagaku Sōgō-honbu (IRH Headquarters) (ed.) (1990), *'Mind Up Series: Kofuku-no-Kagaku Shokyū Text: Tadashiki Kokoro no Tankyū'*, IRH Press, Tokyo
- Kofuku-no-Kagaku Sōgō-honbu (IRH Headquarters) (ed.) (1991), *'Mind Up Series: Kofuku-no-Kagaku Chūkyū Text: Tadashiki Kokoro no Tankyū'*, IRH Press, Tokyo
- Kofuku-no-Kagaku Sōgō-honbu (IRH Headquarters) (ed.) (1994), *'Hajimete no Buppō Shinri'*, IRH Press, Tokyo
- Kofuku-no-Kagaku Sōgō-honbu (IRH Headquarters) (ed.) (1996), *'Kofuku-no-Kagaku Risshū 10-shūnen Kinen-shi'* (*'Kofuku-no-Kagaku: Commemorative Book on its Tenth Anniversary'*), IRH Headquarters, Tokyo
- Lande, A. and Clarke, Peter B. (1991), *'Japan'*, in Clarke, P.B. and Sutherland, S. (eds.), 1991, Ch.16
- McCormack, Brenda and Hill, Elizabeth (1997), *'Conducting a Survey: The SPSS Workbook'*, International Thomson Business Press, London
- Mann, A. T. (1992), *'Millennium Prophecies: Predictions for the Year 2000'*, Element, Dorset
- Marshall, Gordon (ed.) (1994), *'The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Sociology'*, OUP, Oxford
- Matsunaga, Louella (2000), *'Spirit First, Mind Follows, Body Belongs: Notions of Health, Illness and Disease in Sukyo Mahikari UK'*, in Clarke, P.B. (ed.), 2000, pp.198-239
- McFarland, H. Neill (1967), *'The Rush Hour of the Gods: A Study of New Religious Movements in Japan'*, Macmillan, London
- McKelvey, R. J. (1999), *'The Millennium and the Book of Revelation'*, Lutterworth Press, Cambridge
- Miyata, Noboru (1988), *'Types of Maitreya Belief in Japan'*, in Sponberg, A. and Hardacre, H. (eds.), 1988, Ch.8
- Nakamura, Hajime (ed.) (1995), *'Shin Bukkyō Jiten'*, Seishin Shobō, Tokyo
- Nakayama, Miki (1994), *'Ofudesaki: The Tip of the Writing Brush'*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed., Tenrikyo Church Headquarters, Tenri Jihōsha, Nara
- Newport, Kenneth G.C. (2000), *'Apocalypse and Millennium: Studies in Biblical Eisegesis'*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge
- NHK, Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai: Yoron Chōsa-bu (ed.) (1984), *'Nippon-jin no Shūkyō Ishiki'* (*'The Religious Consciousness of the Japanese'*), NHK Shuppan, Tokyo
- NHK, Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai: Hōsō Bunka Kenkyū-jo (ed.) (2000), *'Gendai Nippon-jin no Ishiki-kōzō'* (*The Structure of the Modern Japanese Consciousness*), 5<sup>th</sup> ed., NHK Shuppan, Tokyo



- Nijū-issei Bunmei Kenkyū-kai (ed.) (1991), *'Korega "Kofuku-no-Kagaku" da!!: Oshie no Subete ga Wakaru Hon'*, Aqua Suppan, Tokyo
- Nishiyama, Shigeru (1997), *'Comment 1 "Shin-Shin Shūkyō Gainen no Gakujutu-teki Yūkō-sei ni tsuite" eno Reply'* in *'Shūkyō to Shakai (Religion and Society)'*, 6/1997, Vol.3, Shūkyō to Shakai Gakkai, Tokyo, pp.25-29
- Nostradamus Scenario Project (ed.) (1994a), *'Eiga Nostradamus Senritsu no Keiji Zenhimitsu'*, IRH Press, Tokyo
- Nostradamus Scenario Project (1994b), *'Nostradamus Senritsu no Keiji - Original Scenario'* (the original film scripts for the film *'The Terrifying Revelations of Nostradamus'*), IRH Press, Tokyo
- Numata, Ken'ya (1987), *'Gendai Shin Shūkyō ni okeru Charisma – Takahashi Shinji to GLA ni Kansuru Ichi-kōsatsu'*, in Shūkyō Shakai-gaku Kenkyū-kai (ed.), 1987, pp.70-90
- Numata, Ken'ya (1994), *'GLA-kei'*, in Inoue et al. (eds.), 1994, pp.88-90
- Numata, Ken'ya (1995), *'Shūkyō to Kagaku no Neo-Paradigm – Shin-Shin Shūkyō o Chūshin to shite'*, Sōgensha, Osaka
- Okawa, Kyoko (1993), *'Haha-to-shite no Kōfuku'*, IRH Press, Tokyo
- Okawa, Ryuho (1988), *'Kofuku-no-Kagaku towa Nanika'*, IRH Press, Tokyo
- Okawa, Ryuho (1989), *'Shin Kofuku-no-Kagaku Nyūmon: Kofuku no Genri to Kokoro no Kagaku'*, IRH Press, Tokyo
- Okawa, Ryuho (1990a), *'Taiyō no Hō: Shinjidai o Terasu Shaka no Keiji'* (Kadokawa version with a different preface), Kadokawa Shoten, Tokyo (see also: Okawa 1991g, 1994d and 1996b)
- Okawa, Ryuho (1990b), *'Kōfuku no Genri: Kyūsei-shu Tatsu (The Principles of Happiness)'*, IRH Press, Tokyo
- Okawa, Ryuho (1990c), *'Utopia no Genri: Kyūsei no Higan'*, IRH Press, Tokyo
- Okawa, Ryuho (1991a), *'Nostradamus no Shin-yogen: 1999-nen to Dai-kyūseishu no Kōrin o Kataru'*, Kadokawa Shoten, Tokyo
- Okawa, Ryuho (1991b), *'Nostradamus Senritsu no Keiji: Jinrui no Kiki Semaru (The Terrifying Revelations of Nostradamus)'*, IRH Press, Tokyo
- Okawa, Ryuho (1991c), *'Kofuku-no-Kagaku towa Nanika: Shoho kara no Shinri'*, Kadokawa Shoten, Tokyo
- Okawa, Ryuho (1991d), *'Heibon Karano Shuppatsu: Dokuritsu suru Seishin no Kiseki'*, Kadokawa Shoten, Tokyo
- Okawa, Ryuho (1991e), *'Buddha Saitan: Enshō-no Butsudeschi-tachi eno Message (The Rebirth of Buddha)'*, Kadokawa Shoten, Tokyo
- Okawa, Ryuho (1991f), *'Eien no Buddha: Fumetsuno Hikari Ima Kokoni'*, IRH Press, Tokyo
- Okawa, Ryuho (1991g), *'Taiyō no Hō: Shin-jidai o Terasu Shaka no Keiji'*, Tsuchiya Shoten, Tokyo, (originally published in 1987; see also: Okawa, 1990a, 1994d and 1996b)
- Okawa, Ryuho (1991h), *'Ogon no Hō: Shin-bunmei o Hiraku Shaka no Eichi'*, Tsuchiya Shoten, Tokyo (originally published in 1987; see also Okawa, 1995b and 2000a)
- Okawa, Ryuho (1992), *'Shūkyō no Chōsen: Miracle no Kaze (The Challenge of Religion)'*, IRH Press, Tokyo
- Okawa, Ryuho (1993a), *'Frankly Speaking: Sekai shin-chitsujo no Mitorizu o Kataru'*, IRH Press, Tokyo, (original Japanese version of *'Buddha Speaks'*, 1995a)
- Okawa, Ryuho (1993b), *'Dynamite Shikō: Miracle Sengen'*, IRH Press, Tokyo, Ch.9: *Kibō no Kakumei*



- Okawa, Ryuho (1994a), *'Risō-kokka Nippon no Jōken: Shūkyō-Rikkoku no Susume'*, IRH Press, Tokyo
- Okawa, Ryuho (1994b), *'Kofuku-no-Kagaku Kōkoku-ron: Shūkyō-Rikkoku eno Chōsen'*, IRH Press, Tokyo
- Okawa, Ryuho (1994d), *'Shin-Taiyō no Hō: El Cantare eno Michi'*, IRH Press, Tokyo (newly revised version of *'Taiyō-no-Hō'* (Okawa, 1991g) and the Japanese version of *'The Laws of the Sun'* (1996b), see also: Okawa, 1990a and 1991g)
- Okawa, Ryuho (1995a), *'Buddha Speaks: Discourses with the Buddha Incarnate'*, IRH Press, Tokyo (English version of *'Frankly Speaking'*, 1993a)
- Okawa, Ryuho (1995b), *'Shin-Ogon no Hō: El Cantare no Rekishi-kan'*, IRH Press, Tokyo (original Japanese version of *'The Golden Laws'*, 2000a)
- Okawa, Ryuho (1995c), *'Shūkyō Sentaku no Jidai: Neo Japanese Dream eno Taidō'*, IRH Press, Tokyo
- Okawa, Ryuho (1995d), *'Eien no Chōsen: Kokunan Shūrai eno Keishō'*, IRH Press, Tokyo
- Okawa, Ryuho (1995e), *'Shinsei Nippon no Shishin: Shin-jidai eno Kokka Sentaku'*, IRH Press, Tokyo
- Okawa, Ryuho (1995f), *'Shinkō Kokuhaku no Jidai: Chie to Jihi no Shin-seiki o Hiraku' (The Age of Declaring Your Faith)*, IRH Press, Tokyo
- Okawa, Ryuho (1995g), *'Kiseki no Jidai o Ikiru: Tempen-chii no Reiteki Himitsu'*, IRH Press, Tokyo
- Okawa, Ryuho (1996a), *'Ai, Mugen: Idainaru Shinko no Chikara'*, Kofuku-no-Kagaku Department of Scriptures, Tokyo
- Okawa, Ryuho (1996b), *'The Laws of the Sun: the Spiritual Laws and History Governing Past, Present and Future'*, Element Books, Dorset (English version of *'Shin Taiyō no Hō'*, 1994d)
- Okawa, Ryuho (1997a), *'Utopia Sōzō-ron: Jinrui no Arata naru Kibō: Creating Utopia on Earth'*, IRH Department of Scriptures, Tokyo
- Okawa, Ryuho (1997b), *'Eien no Hō: El Cantare no Sekai-kan'*, IRH Press, Tokyo (Japanese version of *'The Laws of Eternity'*, 1998b)
- Okawa, Ryuho (1997c), *'Shaka no Honshin: Yomigaeru Buddha no Satori'*, IRH Press, Tokyo (original Japanese version of *'The Essence of Buddha'*, 2002)
- Okawa, Ryuho (1998a), *'Kōfuku no Kakumei: Kokoro no Chikara ga Mirai o Kaeru: A Revolution of Happiness: The Power of Thought to Change the Future'*, IRH Press, Tokyo
- Okawa, Ryuho (1998b), *'The Laws of Eternity: Unfolding the Secrets of the Multidimensional Universe'*, Element Books, Dorset (English version of *'Eien no Hō'*)
- Okawa, Ryuho (1999), *'Han'ei no Hō: Mirai o Tsukuru Shin-Paradigm'*, IRH Press, Tokyo
- Okawa, Ryuho (2000a), *'The Golden Laws: The Buddhist Path to a Spiritual Dawn'*, Element Books, Dorset (English version of *'Shin Ogon no Hō'*, 1995b)
- Okawa, Ryuho (2000b), *'Reiteki-seikatsu to Shinkō-seikatsu, Shinkō to Honzon ni Tsuite'*, Kofuku-no-Kagaku, Tokyo (Booklet based on President Okawa's two special sermons in 1999, a special lecture booklet available within Kofuku-no-Kagaku)
- Okawa, Ryuho (2001), *'Kiseki no Hō: Jinrui Saisei no Genkai'*, IRH Press, Tokyo
- Okawa, Ryuho (2002), *'The Essence of Buddha: The Path of Enlightenment'*, Lantern Books, New York (English version of *'Shaka no Honshin'*, 1997c)
- Okudaira, Yasuhiro (1998), *'Journalism to Hō'*, Shinsei-sha, Tokyo, Ch.7 (on Kofuku-no-Kagaku members)



- Ooms, Emily Groszos (1993), *Women and Millenarian Protest in Meiji Japan: Deguchi Nao and Omotokyo*, Cornell University East Asia Program, New York
- Palmer, Martin (1992), *Dancing to Armageddon*, Aquarian, London
- Puttick, Elizabeth and Clarke, Peter B. (eds.) (1993), see: Clarke, P. B. and Puttick E., 1993
- Puttick, Elizabeth (1994), *Gender, Discipleship and Charismatic Authority in the Rajneesh Movement*, Ph.D Thesis, King's College, London
- Reader, Ian (1991), *Religion in Contemporary Japan*, Macmillan, London
- Reader, Ian (1996), *A Poisonous Cocktail? Aum Shinrikyō's Path to Violence*, Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS), Copenhagen
- Repp, Martin (1998), *Millennial Movements in East and Southeast Asia - An Introduction*, in 'Japanese Religions', Vol.23 Nos. 1 & 2, January 1998, NCC Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions, Kyoto, pp.1-10
- Robertson, Roland (ed.) (1969), *Sociology of Religion*, Penguin Education, Middlesex
- Robertson, Roland (1972), *The Sociological Interpretation of Religion*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford
- Shimazono, Susumu (1979), *The Living Kami Idea in the New Religions of Japan*, from: *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol.6, No.3, September, pp.389-411
- Shimazono, Susumu (1986), *The Development of Millennialistic Thought in Japan's New Religions: From Tenrikyō to Honmichi*, in Beckford, J.A. (ed.), 1986, Ch.3
- Shimazono, Susumu (1987), *Kyōso to Shūkyō-teki Shidōsha-sūhai no Kenkyū-kadai*, in Shūkyō Shakai-gaku Kenkyū-kai (ed.), 1987, pp.11-35
- Shimazono, Susumu (1992a), *Gendai Kyūsai-Shūkyō-Ron*, Seikyū-sha, Tokyo
- Shimazono, Susumu (1992b), *Shin-Shin Shūkyō to Shūkyō Boom*, Iwanami Booklet No.237, Iwanami, Tokyo
- Shimazono, Susumu (1994), *Kami to Hotoke o Koete: Seicho-no-Ie no Kyūsai Shishō no Seisei*, in *Hotoke to Kami*, Iwanami, Tokyo
- Shimazono, Susumu (1995), *Aum Shinrikyō no Kiseki*, Iwanami Booklet No.379, Iwanami, Tokyo
- Shimazono, Susumu (1997a), *Comment 2: Jidai no Chōkō o Yomitoru – Aru-jiki no Undō no Shūgōtai o "Shin-Shin Shūkyō" to Yobu Igi*, in *Shūkyō to Shakai (Religion and Society)*, 6/1997, Vol.3, Shūkyō to Shakai Gakkai, Tokyo, pp.30-6
- Shimazono, Susumu (1997b), *Gendai-shūkyō no Kanōsei: Aum Shinrikyō to Bōryoku*, Gendai no Shūkyō 2, Iwanami, Tokyo
- Shimazono, Susumu (1999), *Asian Religions and Sociology: The Case of New Religion Studies in Japan*, in Voyer, L. and Billet, J. (eds.), 1999, pp.183-93
- Shimazono, Susumu (2001), *Post Modern no Shin Shūkyō: Gendai Nippon no Seishin-jōkyō no Teiryū*, Tokyo-dō Shuppan, Tokyo
- Shūkyō Shakai-gaku Kenkyū-kai (ed.) (1987), *Kyōso to Sono Shūhen*, Yūzankaku Suppan, Tokyo
- Siklós, Bulcso (1990), *Buddhism in Japan*, in Hardy, F. (ed.), 1990, Ch.11
- Smart, Ninian (1989), *The World's Religions: Old Traditions and Modern Transformations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge
- Somers, Jeffrey I. (1994), *Japanese New Religious Movements in Britain*, in Clarke, P. B. and Somers, J. (eds.), 1994, Ch.5
- Sponberg, Alan and Hardacre, Helen (eds.) (1988), *Maitreya, the Future Buddha*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988, Ch.8 (Miyata) and Ch.12 (Hardacre)
- Stark, Rodney and Glock, Charles Y. (1971), see: Glock, C.Y. and Stark, R., 1971



- Stark, Rodney and Bainbridge, William Sims (1985), *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival and Cult Formation*, University of California Press, Berkeley, pp.429-56
- Sumiya, Kazuhiko (1970), *Max Weber: Gendai eno Shisōteki Shiza*, NHK Books, Tokyo
- Sutherland, Stewart and Clarke, Peter B. (eds.) (1991), see: Clarke P.B. and Sutherland S. (eds.), 1991
- Takahashi, Shinji (1978), *Kokoro no Hakken: Sinri-hen*, Ryū Books, Keizaikai, Tokyo
- Tanemura, Shūgaku (1995), *Yoi Shūkyō, Warui Shūkyō: Shūkyō niwa Seija ga Aru*, in Kofuku-no-Kagaku Kōhō-kyoku (ed.), 1995, pp.13-64
- Taniguchi, Masaharu (1962), *Tō-Higan no Shinji*, Nippon Kyōbun-sha, Tokyo
- Taniguchi, Masaharu (1988), *Seinen no Sho*, Nippon Kyōbun-sha, Tokyo
- Taniguchi, Masaharu (1992a), *Seimei no Jissō (The Truth of Life)*, Vol.1, Nippon Kyōbun-sha, Tokyo
- Taniguchi, Masaharu (1992b), *Seimei no Jissō*, Vol.19, Nippon Kyōbun-sha, Tokyo
- Taniguchi, Masaharu (1993), *Yamato no Kuni Nippon: Senryō-ka no Keiji to Sonogo no Ronsaku*, Nippon Kyōbun-sha, Tokyo
- Tenrikyo Overseas Mission Department (ed.) (1986), *The Teachings and History of Tenrikyo*, Tenri Jihōsha, Nara
- Thomsen, Harry (1963), *The New Religions of Japan*, C. E. Tuttle, Tokyo
- Umetsu, Reiji (1997), *Reiyūkai*, in Inoue (ed.), 1997a, p.208
- Voye, Liliane and Billet, Jaak (eds.) (1999), *Sociology and Religions: An Ambiguous Relationship*, Kadoc-Studies 23, Leuven University Press, Leuven
- Wallis, Roy (1983), *Sex, Violence and Religion*, in *Update – Quarterly Journal on New Religious Movements*, Vol.7, No.4 (December, 1983), Dialogue Center, Aarhus (Denmark), pp.3-11
- Wallis, Roy (1984), *The Elementary Forms of the New Religious Life*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London
- Weber, Max (1949), *The Methodology of the Social Science*, translated and edited by Edward A. Shils and Henry A. Finch, with a foreword by Edward A. Shils, Free Press, New York
- Weber, Max (1963), *The Sociology of Religion*, translated by Ephraim Fischhoff, introduction by Talcott Parsons, 4th ed., Beacon Press, Boston
- Weber, Max (1964), *The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation*, translated by A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons, edited with an introduction by Talcott Parsons, Free Press, New York, Ch.III (sections I-V)
- Weber, Max (1991), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, translated and edited by H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, and a Preface by Bryan S. Turner, Routledge, London, Part III
- Williams, Paul (1989), *Mahāyāna Buddhism: the Doctrinal Foundations*, Routledge, London
- Wilson, Bryan R. (1969), *A Typology of Sects*, in Robertson R. (ed.), 1969, Ch.20, pp.361-383
- Wilson, Bryan R. (1982), *Religion in Sociological Perspective*, OUP, Oxford
- Wilson, Bryan R. (1990), *Social Dimensions of Sectarianism: Sects and New Religious Movements in Contemporary Society*, Clarendon Press, OUP, Oxford
- Wilson, Bryan R. (1991), *“Secularisation”: Religion in the Modern World*, in Clarke, P.B. & Sutherland, S. (eds.), 1991, Ch.18
- Wilson, Bryan R. and Dobbelaere, Karel (1994), *A Time to Chant: The Soka Gakkai Buddhists in Britain*, Clarendon Press, Oxford



- Wilson, Bryan R. and Cresswell, Jamie (eds.) (1999), *'New Religious Movements: Challenge and Response'*, Routledge, London
- Worsley, Peter (1957), *'The Trumpet Shall Sound: A Study of "Cargo" Cults in Melanesia'*, MacGibbon & Kee, London
- Yamashita, Akiko (1997), *'Seiki-matsu no Mirai-shūkyō - Kofuku-no-Kagaku-ron'*, in *'Deai: Kirisuto-kyo to Sho-shūkyō'*, Vol.12, Nos. 1 & 2, June 1997, NCC (The National Christian Council, Japan) Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions, Kyoto, pp.66-92
- Yamashita, Akiko (1998), *'The "Eschatology" of Japanese New and New New Religions: From Tenrikyo to Kofuku-no-Kagaku'*, in *'Japanese Religions'*, Vol.23, Nos.1 & 2, January 1998, Special Issue, *'Millennial Movements in East and Southeast Asia'*, NCC Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions, Kyoto, pp.125-142

### Magazines, Journals and Newspapers

*'Gekkan Kofuku-no-Kagaku'* (Kofuku-no-Kagaku Monthly: Kofuku-no-Kagaku's official journal for members, issued monthly (in Japanese), Special Issue (7/1991), No.55 (9/1991), No.71 (1/1993), No.83 (1/1994), No.84 (2/1994), No.85 (3/1994), No.86 (6/1994), No.87 (5/1994), No.88 (6/1994), No.89 (7/1994), No.99 (5/1995), No.106 (12/1995), No.113 (7/1996), No.114 (8/1996), No.115 (9/1996), No.119 (1/1997), No.125 (7/1997), No.129 (11/1997), No.130 (12/1997), No.132 (2/1998), No.145 (3/1999), No.155 (1/2000), No.156 (2/2000), No.167 (1/2001), No.168 (2/2001), No.193 (3/2003), No.194 (4/2003), No.195 (5/2003))

*'Gekkan Samsāra'* (December, 1991), Article: *'Hussein no Kakoze wa Ashikaga Takauji desu'* (*'In his previous life, Saddam Hussein was a Japanese Samurai Warrior, Ashikaga Takauji'*), transcription of an interview with Ryuho Okawa conducted by Sōichirō Tawara *'Battle Interview'*, Tokyo, pp.44-57

*'Gekkan Seikai'* (June, 1997), Article: *'Shinkō no Jiyū no Shin no Jitsugen o Mezashite: Kofuku-no-Kagaku'*, Seikai-sha, Tokyo, pp.130-3

*'Liberty, The'* (monthly magazine published by Kofuku-no-Kagaku, available at bookshops), IRH Press, Tokyo, 5/1995, 4/1997, 5/1997, 6/1997, 8/1998, 10/1998, 3/1999, 1/2001

Nanzan Institute for Religions & Culture (ed.) (1995), *'Bulletin of the Nanzan Institute for Religions & Culture'*, No.19, Spring 1995, Nanzan Institute for Religions & Culture, Nagoya

NCC: The National Christian Council (ed.) (1997), *'Deai: Kirisuto-kyo to Sho-shūkyō'*, Vol.12, Nos. 1 & 2, June, 1997, NCC Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions, Kyoto

NCC: The National Christian Council (ed.) (1998), *'Japanese Religions'*, Vol.23, Nos. 1 & 2, January, 1998, Special Issue, *'Millennial Movements in East and Southeast Asia'*, NCC Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions, Kyoto

*'Shūkyō to Shakai (Religion & Society)'*, (1997), Vol.3, 6/1997, Shūkyō to Shakai Gakkai, Tokyo, articles on the concept of the 'new' new religions by Inoue, Nishiyama and Shimazono



'*Daily Telegraph, The*' (25<sup>th</sup> May, 1996), Arts.7 '*The Decline of the West*' (Book review for Ryūho Okawa's '*The Laws of the Sun*', Element Books edition)

'*Financial Times, The*' (7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> December, 1991), Article: '*Japan bows to a new god*', by Robert Thomson

'*Mainichi Shimbun (The Daily Mainichi)*' (27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> June, 2000), Articles on 'Freeter'

'*Times, The*', (13<sup>th</sup> March, 1998), Article on 'Asteroid XFII'

### Other References

'*Holy Bible, The*', The New Revised Standard Version with Apocrypha (NRSV), OUP, Oxford, 1989

'*Kōji-en*', 5<sup>th</sup> ed., Iwanami Shoten, Tokyo, 1998

'*Kofuku-no-Kagaku no Sugao: Ima Hontō no Shūkyō o Kangaeru*', IRH Press, Tokyo, 1997 (VHS Video tape introducing the activities of Kofuku-no-Kagaku)

Mass-Comi Rinri Kenkyū-kai (ed.) (1994), '*Mass-Comi Rinri Kenkyū-kai Guide Book*' (a booklet issued by Kofuku-no-Kagaku's research group, 'Mass-Comi Rinri Kenkyū-kai' examining the moral and ethical issues of the mass media), Mass-Comi Rinri Kenkyū-kai Jimu-kyoku, Tokyo

'*Nostradamus Senritsu no Keiji: Shijō-hatsu no Ijigen-taiken Movie*', the official promotion leaflet for Kofuku-no-Kagaku's feature film: '*The Terrifying Revelations of Nostradamus*', IRH Press, Tokyo, 1994

'*Nostradamus Senritsu no Keiji*', VHS, extended version on a home video of the feature film: '*The Terrifying Revelations of Nostradamus*', IRH Press, Tokyo, 1995

